

**COGNITIVE DECONSTRUCTION
IN
CHILD MOLESTERS**

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of Master of Arts in Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Child molesters present with a variety of characteristics that contribute to the development and perpetuation of their offending, which can be further utilised in the assessment of offender subtypes. Offenders' cognitive dysfunctions, while critical, are a largely uncharted area of theory and empirical investigation. More comprehensive examinations are needed to further elucidate the nature of offenders' cognitions, the mechanisms by which they are generated, and to inform treatment. Twenty-five child molesters from the Kia Marama unit at Rolleston Prison, provided a detailed narrative of their most recent or typical offence, structured according to stages of the relapse prevention model. First, in order to compile a descriptive profile of the men's dysfunctional cognitions, their interview transcripts were analysed according to a multilevel model of dysfunctional cognitions. Cognitive concepts were explored and identified for their thematic contents, operational processes and communication styles, via the multilevel system. Second, participants were classified as either preferential or situational childmolester subtypes, revealing a number of differences on the cognitive variables examined. Third, it was predicted by the theory of cognitive deconstruction that the situational men would engage in more instances of denials and minimisations than preferential men. In a separate analysis, the men's versions of their offence behaviours were compared with judicial reports for discrepancies identified in a minimisations and denials checklist. The expected difference between the offender subtypes was confirmed, and the significance of the observed results are discussed for their implications in theory, practice and future investigations.

(I) INTRODUCTION TO THE SEXUAL ABUSE OF CHILDREN

In recent times, our society has become increasingly self-critical. We have launched into questioning our former beliefs, and subjects once considered taboo, are now at the forefront of public interest. One such subject is sexual offending, in particular child molestation, once deemed a private matter if indeed it existed. However, public awareness of this field of crime has been greatly heightened.

To attribute this enlightenment to a single factor would be a difficult task, as it is most likely due to a combination of factors, for example, a spin-off from the women's liberation movement, media coverage, academic contributions and so forth. What is important is that the rates of reported child molestation are high and appear to be increasing. The essential point is that for those offenders who are convicted, rehabilitative measures are becoming an integral component of the sentences served.

For the child molester, cognitive-behavioural interventions have begun to emerge as the most effective forms of treatment. While no one programme thus far has had complete success with every individual treated, there is evidence that for a substantial number of offenders, recidivism rates have declined as a result of treatment. However, theoretical explanations and research in this area are still in their infancy, and their continued generation is a necessary endeavour in order to guide and refine treatment techniques for maximum efficacy. In justifying ongoing efforts in this field, an assessment of current rates of sexual offending is warranted, in order to gauge the extent and severity involved.

Incidence of Sexual Assaults on Children and Adolescents

Justification for rehabilitation is evident when one considers both the incidence of child sexual abuse, apparently on the incline, and subsequent damage experienced by victims. Because official statistics are thought to underestimate the incidence of abuse, a number of recent studies have sought to uncover prevalence rates by utilising survey methods with various non-clinical populations.

Salter (1988) reviewed the findings obtained from several studies conducted within the past ten years and summarised the rates of abuse for both males and females. Taken together, these data demonstrated that the experience of sexual abuse ranged

from 7.7 % to 38 % in non-clinical populations. Despite variations in definitional criteria and sampling procedures utilised in the studies, Salter observed that the levels of abuse documented in all the surveys were consistently high.

The most comprehensive investigations, those enlisting large scale random samples (Badgley, 1984; Russell, 1984) found rates of sexual abuse in 22% to 38% of females under the age of eighteen, and in 10% of males. Mrazek (1984) also reviewed the available literature and found that 10 to 15 % of children and adolescents had been victimised at least once, with twice as many girls being abused than boys. This finding concurs with prevalence rates summarised by Salter (1988). Sexual abuse of children then, occurs with alarming frequency, and that the general trend is for twice as many females than males to be victimised in this way.

Although previous writers have tended to dismiss the damage claimed to be inflicted on victims as fallacious, increasing evidence indicates that sexually abused children do experience subsequent emotional and physical damage (Travin, Bluestone, Coleman, Cullen, & Melella, 1985). Substantial proportions of child sex offenders have been found to engage in physical force during the commission of an offence. Christie, Marshall, and Lanthier (1979) analysed the police records, probation presenting reports, courtroom transcripts and medical reports of 150 imprisoned sex offenders for the use of violence. They determined that 58 % of the child sex offenders had engaged in physical force during their offences. Furthermore, 42 % of the youngsters abused were physically injured in the process of the assault.

It is clear from the prevalence studies cited above, that child sexual abuse occurs with frightening frequency and has traumatic consequences for victims. Therefore, the ultimate aim of offender treatment is to prevent reoffending, thereby saving potential victims. To achieve this goal, information about offenders themselves is necessary in identifying specific types of child molesters and characteristics of their offence patterns. The following discussion examines conviction rates found for sex offenders in New Zealand. Next, research findings regarding the age of onset of sexually deviant behaviour and victim gender preferences are presented.

Base Rates and Characteristics of Sexual Offenders

The general trend in overall offending indicates that the number of arrests and repeat offences increase every year. In 1985, 73 % of all arrestees were found to have had previous convictions, hence a substantial proportion of crime is committed by recidivists (McLean & Rush, 1990). With respect to child molesters, the value of interventions is evident, given that in the absence of treatment, it is estimated that 45 % will reoffend (Marshall & Barbaree, 1989). Yet with treatment, 15 % or less are expected to reoffend, thereby reducing recidivism (Marshall et al., 1989).

The rates and patterns of sexual offending in New Zealand have been investigated by McLean and Rush (1990). In the period from 1978-1985, there were 8173 convictions, committed by 4599 distinct offenders. Perpetrators were almost exclusively male, responsible for approximately 74% of convictions, and 82% of offenders. Four major categories of offences were examined: Sexual-aggressive, Sexual Affronts, Incest and Against the Young. Incest was defined as a separate category if the abuse involved intercourse and a family member.

Of the 4599 offenders, 37% had been convicted for at least one offence Against the Young, followed by Sexual-aggressive at 23%, then Sexual Affronts at 22%, and Incest at 3%. Similarly, of the 8173 convictions, 36% occurred Against the Young, 20% were Sexual-aggressive, then Sexual Affronts at 18%, and Incest comprising 3% of convictions. Thus, in terms of sexual offenders, the largest subtype of offenders is comprised of child molesters, committing a similar ordinal proportion of sexual crimes.

Seriousness ratings were obtained by utilising the Kellar-Carlson scale (Kellar, 1977) and demonstrated that Offences Against the Young scored highly at 19, while Incest received 11, with 20 being the maximum. Within the context of overall offending, sexual offences account for around 10% of all convictions, a seemingly modest proportion. However, the severity of the crimes involved, and the high rates of reoffending make rehabilitative efforts an imperative (McLean & Rush, 1990).

Examination of these offending statistics demonstrates not only a data-based rationale for developing and implementing intervention programmes, but also that sex offenders do not comprise a homogeneous group. The data indicate that treatment of those men who offend against children requires prioritisation, with sexual-aggressors next.

Onset of Sexual Deviance in Child Molesters

Data concerning the age of onset of sexually deviant behaviour is also required for the development of more specific data-driven etiological theories, especially if the identification of subtypes is to be facilitated. Marshall and Barbaree (1991) noted that reported onset rates for sex offenders in general have not concurred, therefore resolution and clarification of the contrasting observations is required. However, data are available that relate specifically to onset rates and victim preferences of child molesters.

For child molesters, the median age of commission of the first offence is reported to be as early as 16 years of age (Groth, Hobson, & Gary, 1982). Groth (1978) found all his clients to have engaged in their first offence prior to the age of 40 years. The majority, over 80%, executed their first assault before 30 years of age, and 5% committed their first offence prior to adolescence. In most cases, the offenders had known their victims previously, at least as acquaintances rather than strangers.

Documentation indicates that the majority (three quarters) of child molesters assault female victims, with almost one quarter victimising males, followed by a small minority who violate victims of both genders (Lanyon, 1986). The base-rate data on sex offenders in New Zealand (McLean & Rush, 1990), reveals that 82 % of Incest offenders were fathers who assaulted their female children. Of offenders Against the Young, the majority, 55%, assaulted girls aged between 12 and 16 years, with 31% of offenders abusing girls under 12 years of age, and 19% having assaulted male children under the age of 16 years.

Thus the majority of male sexual abusers of children, target young females, are usually previously acquainted with their victims, and tend to start their offending careers in early adulthood, if not before. Data concerning descriptive features of offenders and their crimes are important for the purposes of developing offender subtypes and subsequent treatment efforts in order to prevent reoffending.

Currently, the accepted index of treatment success is the measurement of recidivism rates; an intervention is deemed effective if it reduces reoffending. Assessment of reoffending requires an adequate time lapse before follow-up, and depends on the offender type. Child molesters typically do not reoffend for some time after release, therefore, a minimum of three years is necessary in assessing the effect of treatment in preventing an individual's recidivism (Marshall, Jones, Johnston, Ward, & Barbaree, 1991).

Current Interventions for Treating the Child Molester

While a review of outcome studies of treatment interventions is beyond the aim and scope of the current paper, it is necessary to comment on the controversy surrounding this area over the preceding decades. Research and evaluations concerning sex offender treatments have not always yielded consistently positive results. For example, some early reviewers (Blair & Lanyon, 1981; Furby, Weinrot, & Blackshaw, 1989) argued that assessments of treatment effects are precluded by the methodological problems inherent in reported outcome studies, and therefore could not be determined.

Subsequent to these early reviews, a great deal of literature has been generated regarding sex offenders, accompanied by continued modifications to treatment initiatives. With increasing evidence to demonstrate that interventions can be effective, recent reviews have been concerned with evaluating outcome studies of more contemporary interventions, and the conclusions formulated have been more encouraging and optimistic.

Central to the findings is that successful interventions do not attempt to reform all types of sex offenders, but instead are specifically tailored to the needs and characteristics of particular offender subtypes. Several reviewers have converged on this perspective, and point out that interventions assessed in early evaluations have been supplanted by more sophisticated approaches implemented in recent times (for more comprehensive reviews see Becker & Hunter, 1992; Marshall, Jones, Ward, Johnston, & Barbaree, 1991; Marshall & Pithers, 1994; McLaren, 1992).

For the child molester, multifaceted programmes appear to be the most effective. Interventions designed for their treatment are comprehensive in nature, and target a broad range of the offender's functioning. Included are the modification of deviant sexual interests (e.g., by orgasmic reconditioning); changes in the thinking (e.g., by cognitive restructuring); and behaviour patterns, characteristic of such offenders (via social skills, assertiveness training, and relapse prevention) (McLaren, 1992).

Contemporary interventions then, through targeting a range of deficits, reflect the current paradigm that conceptualises sexual abuse as a fusion of physiological arousal and distorted emotional needs (Schwartz, 1992). Particularly salient are the dysfunctional thinking (cognitive distortions) styles employed by child molesters (Pithers, Marques, Gibat, & Marlatt, 1983), although direct focus on this has only recently incorporated into treatment programmes. While cognitive elements are now

recognised as critical in the etiology and perpetuation of child molestation, our understanding of their nature is at present limited, and investigations sparse.

Distorted or dysfunctional cognitions in child molesters is examined in detail in a later section, which reviews the available literature and current research findings. Included are examinations of the types of distorted thinking patterns that have been observed in child molesters, accompanied by theoretical assertions which attempt to explain their contributions to the development and perpetuation of such offending. The proceeding discussion, however, is intended to briefly introduce the concept of 'cognitive distortions', within the context of sexual offending. This is to prepare the reader for subsequent passages in which frequent reference to the term is made, and because the present study explores cognitive features in a sample of incarcerated child molesters.

Cognitive Elements in the Sexual Abuse of Children

Dysfunctional cognitions include faulty or maladaptive thinking patterns and beliefs enlisted by sex offenders. Distorted or dysfunctional cognitions, accompanied by emotional deficits, are thought to play a vital role in the etiology and maintenance of sexually abusive behaviour. These manifest in different forms, content, and levels of cognitive processing, which appear to vary according to their relation to temporal factors in the offence chain. Included are preexisting maladaptive beliefs regarding the appropriateness of sexual contact with children, to retrospective type distortions concerning the true extent of the sexual intrusion upon the victim. An offender's failure to recognise the potential ramifications for his victim is also commonly observed, and reflects an inability to empathise with his victim's experience.

The nature of generalised maladaptive beliefs appears to differ from distortions of more offence-specific elements an offender may engage in, both in their content, and the cognitive operations involved in their processing. However, the different forms of dysfunctional thinking are frequently identified under the general umbrella of 'cognitive distortions'. Functioning as a generic label, the term has been used to encompass the full spectrum of faulty thinking observed in child molesters. The term remains inadequately defined, and this may account for its inconsistent usage in the literature.

Recently, the term 'cognitive dysfunctions' (Fon, 1996), was advanced, and is more appropriate for describing features of faulty cognitions. Faulty cognitions are frequently identified in offenders by examining only their contents, or thematic features.

However, the specific contents of an offender's thoughts may be a function of several cognitive processes that are engaged in, and their contributions are encapsulated in the term cited above.

Examination of the literature indicates the presence of two main forms of dysfunctional cognitions, identified here as generalised maladaptive beliefs and distortions of offence-related features. These presumably reflect varying degrees of cognitive operations involved in their processing and relative effects on offending behaviour. In conjunction with temporal factors, maladaptive beliefs and distortions apparently exert varying influences in both the development and continuation of an offender's sexually abusive behaviour.

A child molester who genuinely endorses the belief that "sex with children is not wrong, it is just legally sanctioned", indicates the presence of a generalised maladaptive belief. Such an entrenched attitude is likely to reside at the same level of processing involved in assimilating other general beliefs. An offender's maladaptive belief then, may represent a fundamental component of his value system, acquired in the early stages of his learning and development, and as such is likely to be extremely resistant to change.

'Distorted' cognitions, however, appear to emerge as situation or offence specific, and imply the presence of processes activated at a more surface level than those involved in maladaptive beliefs. The contents of an offender's distortions vary according to temporal relations in the offence chain, but may emerge during any stage in his offence cycle. Distortions may feature in precipitating an offence, for example, a child's openness may be construed by the man as inviting sexual contact. This self serving interpretation of the child's behaviour may enable the offence to occur, and for some individuals, may also be impacted upon by a pre-existing belief that children actively seek sexual contact.

Similarly, distortions occur during the execution of an offence, such that a child may be perceived as enjoying the experience, if he/she fails to respond with obvious resistance. The construal of the child's response is frequently accompanied by a concurrent failure or inability of the offender to relate to, and empathise with his victim's experience. An absence of empathy, combined with continued engagement in distorted thinking, are presumed to contribute significantly to the perpetuation of this type of offending by failing to inhibit the offending behaviour.

Distortions arising subsequent to an offence frequently concern downgrading aspects of the offence itself, involving degrees of denial, and minimisations of

responsibility, sexual contact, and possible ramifications for the victim. For example, an accused man may deny that an offence occurred, proclaiming innocence of any wrongdoing. Alternatively, he may admit to having offended, but minimises the extent of sexual contact engaged in, by claiming that while sexual contact occurred, it did not progress to the degree of intrusion alleged by the victim.

Rationalisations of, or justifications for, having offended are common in child molesters, especially when confronted by others or when their crimes are revealed. Offenders may use justifications internally, in the form of self talk, in order to reduce the resultant feelings of guilt. Typically, external factors (e.g., alcohol intoxication, a seductive victim, or spousal conflict) are blamed for the commission of the assault. Effectively, these distortions appear as mechanisms by which the offender attempts to evade responsibility for his acts, either by blaming outside factors or refusing to acknowledge the full extent of his behaviour.

In summary, child molesters, in addition to possessing maladaptive beliefs and engaging in distortions, lack the ability to empathise with their victim's experience. This appears to be a consequence of their beliefs, distortions and perceptions, and assists not only in facilitating such behaviour but also in its perpetuation. These patterns of dysfunctional thinking in child molestation are recognised for their centrality in offending, but still require extensive investigation for treatment interventions to be efficacious.

Successful treatment requires a sound theoretical framework that explains the development and identification of factors that maintain sexual offending, with attention being directed to specific subtypes. However, the role of cognitive elements remains a virtually uncharted region, as theoretical and empirical undertakings in this area have largely been devoted to offenders' deviant sexual arousal, heterosexual social skills, and addiction histories (Segal & Stermac, 1990).

Determining the role of dysfunctional cognitions and the associated antecedents from which these beliefs and operational styles develop, will provide further insight into the emergence, commission and maintenance of child molesting behaviour. While treatment programmes now include interventions for targeting distorted cognitions, they still require a well-defined framework regarding their contributions to both the onset and perpetuation of offending. Hence, continued research is warranted, in the quest for an etiological and maintenance model that is both theoretically and clinically viable.

Summary of Introduction To The Sexual Abuse of Children

The preceding introduction demonstrated that enduring efforts in research and rehabilitation of child molesters is justified, according to victimisation rates, offending and onset data, and treatment outcome reviews. Both the base-rate data and outcome studies cited, highlight the heterogeneous nature of sex offenders, making the development of offender-specific etiologies imperative.

A precursory introduction to the features of dysfunctional cognitions was necessary to highlight the main concerns involved in their identification, and these are later explored in depth. Emphasised was that faulty cognitions have recently been recognised as central to the development and maintenance of child molestation, but appear to encapsulate different processing and thematic features. Entrenched maladaptive beliefs are assumed to be a function of an offender's fundamental belief system, acquired early in life and are likely to remain constant throughout his life span. These attitudes imply the presence of cognitive operations which are processed differently from those involved in the distortions of offence-specific features.

Distortions of offence features appear more dynamic in their thematic nature, and appear to result from operational processes occurring at a more surface level. The specific contents of distortions vary among men, and in accordance with temporal factors in the offence process. Distortions made by an offender may be used as permission to assault, and in continuing such behaviour. Ultimately, however, distortions are self serving mechanisms that enable an offender to cognitively shift the locus of control elsewhere, absolving himself of blame and reducing negative feelings associated with his offending.

Dysfunctional cognitions, including maladaptive beliefs and distortions, comprise one feature in an array of factors implicated in the development and maintenance of sexual offending. Therefore, cognitive elements are necessarily defined within the broader context surrounding sexually assaultive behaviour, and are discussed in depth in the literature review that follows.

(II) REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

(A) INTRODUCTION TO THE REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The present review examines the current understanding of dysfunctional cognitions in child molestation by commencing at a general level of inquiry into the development of cognitive features, in order to provide a context for examining these in detail. The first section of the review **(B) Etiological Explanations of Sexual Aggression Against Children**, concerns etiological explanations for the development and perpetuation of sexual offending, beginning with the processes implicated in sexual offending in general and, where available, child molestation in particular.

Numerous models have attempted to explain sexually abusive behaviour, and they range tremendously both in the breadth of explanation they provide, and in the importance accorded to critical factors that are emphasised. A selection of prominent etiologies, illustrating the range of models available, are presented and evaluated. Since sex offenders do not comprise a homogeneous group, the effects of factors deemed salient to their development require etiological formulations for specific offender subtypes. Only recently, a few etiological models have acknowledged the need to discriminate between child molesters and other types of sex offenders.

Subsequent to discriminating different types of sex offenders has been the emergence of systems or typologies, that seek to further classify child molesters into subtypes, according to features characteristic of their offending. Several child molester typologies have recently been proposed. Apart from the Preferential/Situational dichotomy (Groth, 1978) which has frequently been employed in research, most other systems have not been empirically validated and are limited in their assessment and treatment utility.

The current status of child molester typologies is discussed in **(C) The Typology of Preferential and Situational Child Molesters**. Criticisms of the preferential/situational dichotomy have been advanced. However, in the absence of a more viable system, it is advocated for use at the present time. This typology has also been validated in its implementation, and as such, was deemed appropriate for use in the present investigation and will, therefore, be discussed in depth.

Section **(D) Cognitive Factors in Sexual Aggression Against Children**, examines our understanding of dysfunctional cognitions in child molesters, according to research observations and theoretical explanations of their development and function within child sexual abuse. Two avenues of investigation; maladaptive beliefs and cognitive distortions, are reviewed in light of research findings and their implications. Maladaptive beliefs concern investigations of molesters' attitudes about sexual contact, and their general perceptions of children and adults. Cognitive distortions concern aspects of denial, minimisations and excuses, that have been studied in child molesters.

The status of commonly utilised devices for the elicitation and measurement of dysfunctional cognitions is examined in the subsequent section, **(E) Assessment of Cognitive Features in Child Molesters**. The most widely utilised device for assessing dysfunctional cognitions in molesters, the Abel Becker Cognitions Scale (Abel et al., 1989) is evaluated. Limitations inherent in the scale restrict its ability to identify faulty thinking, as demonstrated by results from the cited studies.

(F) A Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions (Fon, 1996) is introduced as an alternative scheme for classifying dysfunctional cognitions according to their content, processing levels, general communication styles, and temporal relationships. It is unique in that it enables the assessment of faulty cognitions to incorporate functional as well as content or thematic features. The model forms the basis for the data analysis procedures implemented in the present study and is, therefore, described in detail.

(G) Cognitive Deconstruction in Child Molesters (Ward, Hudson, & Marshall, 1995) is a middle level theory relating specifically to distorted thinking in child molesters. It is designed to amalgamate the current body of knowledge into a comprehensive framework for understanding the processes involved in molesters' cognitions and their broader contextual features. Central to the theory are differences in cognitive functioning between early and late onset offenders, and these have implications for the findings in the present study.

The literature review concludes with **(H) General Summary and Introduction to The Present Study**, in order to highlight the essential features discussed, and to outline the aims of the present study in which the dysfunctional cognitions in a population of incarcerated child molesters were examined. The third part of this report details the investigation and concludes with suggestions for future research directions.

(B) ETIOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF SEXUAL AGGRESSION AGAINST CHILDREN

Overview of Etiological Formulations

During the preceding decades, a considerable number of theoretical contributions to the etiology of child molestation have been developed. These have ranged from single factor explanations to both more complex, theoretical frameworks, as well as empirically based accounts. Further variations among these conceptualisations are apparent in the importance accorded to the influence of temporal and distal factors. For example, etiological explanations of sexual offending in single factor assertions tend to be confined within the discrete time context surrounding an offence. More complex models, on the other hand, in emphasising the importance of multiple factors, have incorporated earlier developmental experiences, and more global aspects of offenders' psychological makeup.

In order to maximise treatment efficacy, the development of a unified model of etiology and treatment that incorporates the most pertinent motivational variables specific to various subtypes of offenders is required (Hall & Hirschman, 1992). However, only within the past decade have unified and more comprehensive models of etiology and treatment emerged and come to the fore. Hall et al., (1992) suggest this may be due to the uniqueness and complexity of sexual offending behaviour, and the heterogeneity of offenders. Thus where treatment efforts have been limited in their efficacy, this may be attributable in part to the absence of an explanatory model that is both comprehensive and sufficiently applicable to research and clinical endeavours.

Early models related etiology to single factors of a psychological nature, such as mental deficiency, or to a physiological origin, for example, alcoholism and sexual desire. According to Groth (1978), most of these theoretical formulations have not resulted in a systematic body of research. These single factor explanations, in the view of Ward, Loudon, Hudson, and Marshall (1995), reflect the currently accepted paradigms of their time, and their development has been guided by clinical concerns rather than sound theory. Essentially, by focusing on a single aspect, such models have failed to recognise the complexity of sexual offending behaviour, limiting their clinical utility.

Inadequacies presented by single factor explanations have resulted in the recent development of increasingly more complex models which incorporate wider aspects of sex offenders' functioning. Included in contemporary formulations are factors such as

adverse developmental experiences, personality, affect, interpersonal and sociocultural factors, cognitions, and situational variables. This approach reflects the move from a purely hypothetical source of explanation to data-driven, empirical formulations, which has resulted in more comprehensive etiological explanations.

Etiological explanations of univariate or single factor exponents are explicated by physiological arousal, multivariate models, by Finkelhor's Four-Factor model, Marshall and Barbaree's Integrated theory, and Pither's Relapse Prevention model. These formulations are discussed below, beginning with univariate approaches to explain the sexual assault of children.

Single Factor Models

Univariate models, are limited in their explanatory capacity. They are not redundant, however, but may successfully function as components of a broader, more encompassing model, and subsequent treatment methods. An example of a single factor model is based on deviant sexual responding, and is illustrative of perhaps the most prolific and familiar of all the univariate formulations.

According to physiological-based perspectives (e.g., Abel, Becker, Murphy, & Flannagan, 1981) deviant sexual behaviour stems from a physiological abnormality, namely inappropriate sexual arousal. The notion resulted from the observation that sex offenders frequently exhibit equivalent or greater response to child stimuli than to adults. However, the explanatory power of deviant sexual arousal is limited, as clinical studies frequently demonstrate the experience of sexual arousal to child stimuli in non-offenders.

Similarly, child molesters often exhibit high levels of arousal to adult stimuli as well as to children. Other types of sex offenders, also demonstrate sexual responsiveness to child stimuli under laboratory conditions, yet their sexual offending histories exclude child victims. Sexual arousal then, cannot be viewed as an exclusive feature in diagnosing child molesters, since considerable numbers of non-offenders and other sex offenders are responsive to provocative stimuli including depictions of children.

However, a man's sexual arousal or associated fantasy resulting from exposure to such stimuli, does not necessarily culminate in the execution of an offence. Assigning sexual arousal from child stimuli to "deviancy", is questionable, given the implicit reference is to functions that occur outside the 'normal' range. Indeed, clinical observations have indicated the presence of sexual responsiveness to age-inappropriate stimuli in many members of the non-offending population. Possibly then, arousal to

children is more prevalent than it is presumed to be, and in itself is not necessarily deviant, but sexually assaultive behaviour is. Nevertheless, the model fails to explain an offender's departure from arousal state to enactment, and therefore, cannot discriminate between individuals who offend and those who do not.

Finally, additional physiological and cognitive factors, such as an individual's age or capacity to suppress sexual responding, could serve to mediate sexual arousal (Hall & Hirschman, 1992). Consequently, the reliance upon sexual arousal in explaining sexually deviant behaviour could result in high rates of false positives identified in non-offenders and/or exclude men who do offend. Thus, physiological assessment is an insufficient determinant of sexually deviant behaviour if used as a sole measure.

Univariate models then, are limited in their ability to explain the etiology of sexual assault against children since assertions are not provided for the heterogeneity of molesters, the complexities of their behaviours and associated psychological processes. According to Hall et al., (1992) it would be extraordinary for a single factor model to adequately explain this behaviour at any rate, since most other deviant behaviours are commonly explained by an array of psychological determinants.

A Four Factor Multivariate Model

More complex conceptualisations concerning the etiology of child sexual abusers have been suggested in the form of multivariate models. Finkelhor's (1984) theory is sociological in origin, and was designed to summarise a range of theories, and to integrate existing research findings, following a review of the available literature.

The model itself is currently utilised in clinical treatment of child molesters, providing a loose framework for assisting men in understanding their own offending (Kia Marama Treatment Unit Overview, 1994). According to the model, four prerequisite conditions contribute to the commission of an offence. These include: (a) the motivation to sexually assault a child, (b) overcoming one's internal inhibitors, (c) overcoming external inhibitors, and (d) overcoming resistance on the part of the child.

The first precondition, motivation to offend, incorporates three components. Included are; (i) the sexual abuse satisfies some emotional demand in the offender, (ii) the child provides a source of sexual arousal and a means of sexual gratification, and (iii) alternative outlets for sexual gratification are either blocked or inhibited in some way (e.g., by his inadequate social skills).

The model asserts that a man's motivation to assault must result from the presence of at least one of these components. However, the theory fails to account for why sexual abuse occurs in cases where sufficient motivation is to satisfy an emotional need. Such a need could otherwise be met in a non-sexual manner, for example, through befriending a child (Hall et al., 1992).

The second precondition, overcoming internal inhibitors against acting on the motivation, proposes a variety of disinhibitors. Included are idiosyncratic factors particular to the offender (alcohol and/or drug intoxication, psychosis, or impulse disorder), situational stresses, sociocultural acceptance of pedophilic behaviour or undefined family boundaries. The third precondition, overcoming external impediments to abuse, relates to accessibility of the child. External inhibitors may be overcome through the absence of supervision, an indisposed spouse, or unusual sleeping arrangements. The removal or absence of external blockers then allow the offender to gain access to his potential victim.

Finally, the fourth precondition, overcoming the child's resistance, may be achieved through several means, including the cultivation of a trusting relationship with the victim, or the use of threat or coercion. According to the theory, a motivational factor, together with overcoming internal and external inhibitors is required for the occurrence of sexual assault. The relative influence of these factors is, however, not articulated, and requires further elucidation of the contributions made by these features (Hall et al., 1992).

While the model operates at a high level of generality, enabling its application to a range of offenders, the multivariate nature of child sex offenders' behaviour is not specifically addressed. Yet, according to Rowan (1988), it is of potential assistance in understanding two subtypes of child molester; incest and female perpetrators. Specifically, some of the dynamics relating to familial incest, can be explained according to its features. For example, an offender's sexual arousal by his children may not dissimilar to that experienced by non-familial abusers, but the family unit may create its own form of blocking, disinhibition and emotionally congruent factors.

Finkelhor's theory was intended to summarise available theorising and research into a comprehensive framework for developing more specific formulations, and is appropriately viewed as a springboard for continued theory, research and treatment. The model's components are helpful in understanding child molesting within a time frame that relates to the commission of the act, rather than predisposing factors in an historical

context. An example of a more comprehensive etiology in which background experiences interact with features of an offender's current situation is discussed below.

An Integrated Theory of the Etiology of Sexual Offending

An integrated theory of sexual offending was proposed by Marshall and Barbaree (1990) to amalgamate the range of available literature regarding causal factors in the development and maintenance of sexual offending. Underpinning the theory is the concept that the ultimate goal for males is to learn to control a biological disposition for self interest, linked with the tendency to fuse sex and aggression. The theory features four major components: (a) Biological Influences, (b) Childhood Experiences, (c) Sociocultural Context, and (d) Transitory Situational Factors.

The first component, biological influences, is based on a biological propensity in males for aggression, and the potential behavioural possibilities to achieve sexual gratification. Such a genetic disposition provides a context for learning appropriate sexual behaviour, rather than inevitably resulting in sexually assaultive behaviour. However, once learning has created and established behavioural patterns, the influence of biological factors is minimal. Biological influences are most apparent at the learning stage, and when significant hormonal changes occur, at puberty.

During pubescence, young males typically undergo changes, such as increases in hormonal levels, influencing both aggression and sexual functions. Consequently, puberty is viewed as a significant stage in the acquisition of enduring sexual tendencies. Since the same biochemical characters underlie aggression, it is plausible that aggression is affected in the same way. Therefore, biological aspects, bestowed upon the developing male, provide him with the task of learning to appropriately distinguish between sex and aggression, rather than fusing the two together.

The relative influence of biological factors does not predict sexually assaultive behaviour alone, as developmental and environmental factors are more critical in contributing to sexual behaviour, and inhibiting aggressive impulses. Beliefs and behaviours learned during childhood determine whether the pubescent male responds to characteristic desires with a prosocial or an antisocial mental set. Such a mindset will be impacted upon by the attitudes of the person's community, and may exist as cogent factors during his life. Sometimes, males who may otherwise be prosocial, may lose the ability to inhibit sexual aggression in response to certain environmental circumstances.

The second factor, childhood experiences, incorporates environmental and experiential features. Essentially, it is possible for early developmental experiences to insufficiently prepare a male for changes at puberty, and his emerging impulses to engage in sex and aggression. Aggression may also result from faulty socialisation, especially a harsh and inconsistent parenting style, and the absence of love. This may isolate the youth from experiencing more appropriate sociosexual interactions, culminating in a quest for self gratification in an individual who has not acquired inhibitions against sexual aggression.

The impact of such adverse developmental experiences can result in low self confidence, and an inability to form attachments with other people. Self confidence is often regarded as an essential precursor to love and intimacy, while the inclination or need for intimacy seems to extend from attachment bonds developed during childhood. A low sense of self esteem, brought on by a feeling of sexual inadequacy may result in sexual assault in an attempt to affirm masculinity, particularly in a male who is unable to cultivate an adult relationship.

Inadequate interpersonal skills, and the absence of positive attachment in childhood, may result in loneliness in adulthood and culminate in feelings of hostility, stress and anxiety, all of which facilitate sexual aggression. Such experiences, common to the sex offender's childhood, appear to contribute to an inability to achieve intimacy and behave empathically, resulting in social ineptitude, low self esteem, self interest, aggression and a negative disposition to adults. These features impede on the changes that occur during pubescence and make the transition from childhood to adulthood more problematic.

The third component, sociocultural factors, deals with cultural elements associated with rape only, based on the finding that high levels of rape appear in societies which sanction interpersonal violence and negative attitudes towards women. According to the social learning perspective, such attitudes and actions can be influenced by pornography, through processes involving precursory and consequent effects.

As antecedents to rape, pornographic depictions, by associating erotic images and violence with the rapist's enjoyment, can induce an observer to believe that he too, will benefit from the activity. Disinhibition of the observer's arousal to rape results, and is vicariously reinforced by, the failure of being caught, and the portrayal of the woman as enjoying the rape (e.g., Check & Malamuth, 1986). These characterisations are

common to pornographic images of rape, and the authors suggest that the same analysis is applicable to child pornography.

Findings indicate that pornographic presentations desensitise violence in non-offenders, and raise hostile attitudes towards females (e.g., Malamuth & Check, 1981). Observers of rape have been found to become more callous toward victims and more forgiving of the offender (Malamuth & Check, 1980). Individuals most vulnerable to the influence of pornography are likely to be men who have experienced a restricted rather than normal upbringing in sexual socialisation (Fisher & Byrne, 1978).

Rapists and child molesters have been found to use pornography more than non-offenders (Marshall, 1988) and childhood exposure appears to predict high rates of sex offending (Davis & Braucht, 1973). Various sociocultural factors may influence sex offending, with some males being more vulnerable than others. However, for some with resistance to these factors, inhibitory controls may be overcome by strong situational features or powerful internal states, leading to the release of aggression.

The fourth factor in the theory, transitory situational factors, refers to a range of external elements that interact with certain states of the person, to facilitate sexual abuse. Aspects of the offender's own condition, or the offence, lead to the loss of control over his behaviour. Some circumstances may be manufactured by the offender himself, while for others, they are environmental. An individual's response to environmental cues depends on his background experiences in determining vulnerability, which varies amongst offenders.

However, the influence of several disinhibitors acting at once, particularly over an extended period of time, may overcome the constraints of even the most prosocial man. To date, few of the possible disinhibitors have been examined, although rapists have reported the influence of alcohol intoxication, anger, prior sexual arousal through pornography, stress and anxiety (Marshall et al., 1990).

In summary, the integrated theory posits that human males are endowed with a capacity to sexually aggress, requiring the acquisition of behavioural inhibitors via training. Constraints may not be learned under harsh, erratic, and loveless parenting, contributing to a fusion of sex and aggression. Cultural dispositions may combine with inadequate parenting to facilitate offending in a vulnerable male who assimilates these views to enhance his sense of manliness. The potential to offend is increased if he is intoxicated, angry, or there is a low risk of detection.

The theory offers a comprehensive explanation of the development of offending, including factors that may both contribute to a predisposition to offend and those that come into play to facilitate its execution. However, the model does not apply to child molesters in particular, and as a consequence, does not address the issue of sex offender subtypes. Thus the theory can be viewed as a general formulation, but differs from Finkelhor's, in that broader early learning experiences are emphasised.

The final theory to be presented, the Relapse Prevention model is different again, as the focus is on factors relating specifically to the offending context. By doing so, the model enables a more detailed examination of factors relevant to an individual's own offending, and this has resulted in its inclusion in treatment programmes.

The Relapse Prevention Model

The model of Relapse Prevention (Pithers, 1990) has been most influential in directing clinical practice, and its introduction to the field of sexual offending has been a valuable asset to cognitive-behavioural programmes (e.g., Kia Marama, at Rolleston Prison, Christchurch). As a therapeutic tool, it is used to assist offenders in identifying critical aspects of their offence cycle, with the ultimate aim of teaching them to recognise and avoid high risk situations. As such, clinical application of model provides offenders with the means to intervene in their own cycle of offending in order to reduce the probability of further offending.

The model has its origins the field of addictions, attributable to Marlatt and Gordon (1985), who identified the importance of relapse processes in other forms of addictions. The nature of sexual abuse shares some common features with other habitual behaviours, such as drug and alcohol addictions. These include: temporary gratification, delayed negative consequences, the potential for high individual and social costs, and difficulties maintaining behaviour change following abstinence. The version of the model used in the treatment of sexual offenders, caters specifically to this type of habitual behaviour (Marshall, Hudson, & Ward, 1992).

Central to the model is the perception of sexual assault as cyclic, with a focus on proximal factors to relapse, rather than distal etiological concerns. The model is comprised of four phases, and these include; (1) Background Factors, (2) High Risk Situations, (3) Lapse, and (4) Relapse. These phases represent a chain of responses that lead to the assault or relapse. At each stage, aspects of affect, cognition and behavioural responses to circumstances, persons or events influence the offenders progression to

relapse. For example, a negative emotional state could serve to trigger the sequence (Marshall et al., 1992).

The first stage, Background Factors, refers to variables which appear to motivate or activate the offending process. These include a man's personal and situational features, his cognitive appraisal of them, and his affective responses. Features of the offender's situation, including lifestyle imbalances such as marital conflict, financial worries, work and other stressors serve to frustrate him, resulting in a sense of deprivation. The resultant negative affect (loneliness, depression, anger), then precipitates a subsequent chain of behaviours, which leads the offender into the second phase, the High Risk Situation (HRS).

The presence of a High Risk Situation is characterised by circumstances that threaten the man's sense of control over his offending behaviour, raising the likelihood of assault occurring. High risk elements often include a negative emotional state such as loneliness, anxiety, or anger, resulting from background stressors. The presence of a potential victim also increases the risk through the opportunity for sexual contact. Influencing how the offender responds to the temptation and opportunity to offend are his perceptions of himself, the victim and the situation.

The third factor, Lapse refers to behaviours and thoughts that precede the offence, and increase the risk of its occurrence. For example, an offender may engage in deviant fantasising, or may overtly plan an offence, by offering to mind a child, or strolling through a playground in search of a child. Actions during this stage result in the final phase, or Relapse, in which the offender engages in the sexual assault.

A variety of cognitive and affective operations are presumed to mediate the transitions between the phases. The transition between Background elements and the High Risk Situation is represented by Seemingly Irrelevant Choices (SIC). These include apparently irrelevant decisions made by the offender at a covert level, which result in the presence of a HRS. For example, an argument with a spouse may leave an offender feeling angry, and in response, he may turn to alcohol. Although seemingly irrelevant, prior experiences of intoxication in similar states, resulting in disinhibition of behavioural restraints, implicates an awareness of a potential relapse, if only subconsciously.

The transition from the HRS to the Lapse is thought to be mediated by the Problem of Immediate Gratification (PIG). In this case, the offender perceives that the short term benefit gained from the activity (sexual gratification) outweighs the potential cost of longer term punishment, should he be discovered. Simultaneously, cognitive distortions may emerge, in order to execute the offence, for example, through justifying his deviant sexual fantasies or minimising potential harm to the victim.

Finally, the mediator between the Lapse and the Relapse, termed Abstinence Violation Effect (AVE), involves both cognitive and emotional aspects. Essentially, the offender resigns himself to the inevitability of the offence occurring, and may rationalise this by convincing himself that he is a sex offender after all, that is an uncontrollable cause. Consequently, such self talk allows him to overcome the conflict he may experience as a result of violating his prior commitment not to reoffend.

Articulation of the cognitive factors involved in the offence chain makes the relapse prevention model essential to both the identification of cognitive elements in offending and their treatment. Research and clinical observation has consistently emphasised the important role cognitive dysfunctions play in perpetuating sexual offending and facilitating progression through the offence chain (Murphy, 1990).

Summary of Etiological Explanations of Sexual Aggression Against Children

Several types of theories have been proposed to account for the etiology of sexual offending, from the postulation of a single cause to multiple and variant causes, with different temporal aspects being emphasised. Currently, empirical validation has not been particularly forthcoming. However, models proffered recently, incorporating the contributions of multiple causes should be regarded as theoretical foundations for developing specific offender subtypes. An advanced understanding of the nature, processes and contents of dysfunctional cognitions would then be attained.

There have been recent attempts to categorise child molesters into subtypes, although several of these typologies exist, the one that has received the most empirical and clinical attention is the classification for Preferential versus Situational offenders (Groth, 1978) and is discussed below.

(B) THE TYPOLOGY OF PREFERENTIAL/SITUATIONAL CHILD MOLESTERS

The Status of Classificatory Systems for Child Molesters

Anecdotal observations of child molesters frequently report shared characteristics among these men, including a sense of alienation, deficits in interpersonal skills, feelings of inadequacy, and a fatalistic view of themselves as being controlled by the environment. Efficacious treatment requires the identification of offender subtypes, classifying groups according to common characteristics of members within groups and differences between groups. A valuable typology, whether theoretical or empirical, requires validation to facilitate further understanding of etiology, the creation of more specific interventions, and enhance the ability to predict reoffending (Knight & Prentky, 1990).

To this end, several classificatory systems have been generated, and these have varied in factors emphasised (Groth, 1978; Knight & Prentky, 1990; Lanyon, 1986). They have also ranged in origin, from theoretically derived typologies, to those developed from empirical investigations. However, data concerning the validity of classificatory systems is largely nonexistent. The majority, while reporting consistencies among abusers, largely remain as speculative models, lacking demonstrable validity and reliability. Thus their potential for informing decisions about rehabilitation, management and prediction are yet to be assessed (Knight et al., 1990).

The most commonly utilised typology, has demonstrated some face validity, and distinguishes between preferential (fixated or early-onset) and situational (regressed or late-onset) child molesters (Groth, 1978). Offenders are dichotomised according to a number of characteristics, but onset appears to be a critical factor, with those whose offending commences in adolescence, as 'fixated', and those who begin in adulthood, as 'regressed' types (Groth, 1978).

The original terms used by Groth, fixated and regressed, are thought to impose restrictive psychodynamic assumptions in their definitions of the molester types. In the current theoretical climate, the terms preferential and situational respectively, are favoured. However, as a courtesy, the original terminology used by Groth will be adhered to within the context of describing the system's features.

Although the preferential/situational molester typology is thought to have its limitations, the system has been found to contain some clinical validity. According to Larsen, Hudson, and Ward (1995) at the level of behaviour description, the distinction between the two types of molesters' aspects of offending encapsulates useful clinical information. It features in the current undertaking, because of its prominence in research endeavours, and in the absence of an alternative system. A more sophisticated typology that has been validated, is not yet available, and reflects the current situation in this area. Suffice to say that our understanding of the different types of sexual offenders, both theoretically and empirically, is limited.

The present section largely concerns a review of the literature relating to the aforementioned offender typology. Included is a profile of each offender type, which describes the characteristics associated with their different styles of abuse and general functioning. Findings that demonstrate the utility of the typology in research endeavours, are considered, as are criticisms of the typology. However, several other typologies exist in the literature. Their mention is warranted in order to illustrate the (limited) scope of inquisition and investigation into child molester subtypes, and to demonstrate the need for continuing efforts in this area.

Other Child Molester Typologies

Child molester typologies have evolved from different sources and range in the depth of criteria used to discriminate different subtypes. Rudimentary systems have been based classifications according to single entities, such as hypothesised psychological aims or motivations that underlie sexual assault (Groth, 1978). Offending behaviour is perceived as a means of gratifying some need, such as diminishing feelings of anxiety or as expressing an unresolved conflict. Other systems separate offenders according to features of assault, such as whether or not physical force was engaged in (Groth, 1978).

Other systems have proposed to classify molesters, according to certain personal characteristics of the offender and his victim, for example "incest" versus "non-incest" offenders. Incest offenders are regarded as being related to the victim(s), as members of the immediate or nuclear family, whereas non-incest offenders include all other molesters. According to such a classification, aspects of family life and spousal relationships are contributing factors to incestual abuse.

A further approach to diagnosis, although relatively atheroetical (Hudson, Ward, & France, 1992) is available in the DSMIII-R (APA, 1987) nomenclature, entitled "Diagnostic criteria for 302.2. Pedophilia". Although recently revised (DSMIV; APA, 1994) the criteria for pedophilia have remained largely unchanged in the latest version. However, despite its intended use in clinical practice, several authors have regarded the diagnostic criteria as limited in its ability to assess offender subtypes. Of treated offenders, only 3% have been found to fit the criteria (Marshall & Barbaree, 1988). Therefore, within the contexts of treatment and investigation, the criteria would be best utilised in conjunction with the preferential and situational criteria (Larsen, Hudson & Ward, 1995) rather than as a sole means of diagnosis.

The most apparent limitation is that the criteria define child molesting behaviour in global terms (Knight & Prentky, 1990) such that a system for assessing offender subtypes is not provided. Consequently the system, by constraining the population of offenders in such a way, does not reflect current applications of treatment intervention. As a result, it is infrequently utilised in practice, since treatment is aimed at men who sexually abuse, irrespective of whether or not the criteria are met (Hudson et al., 1992).

The criteria stipulate that the paraphilia includes "recurrent, intense, sexually arousing fantasies", rendering a reliance upon physiological measures of arousal for assessment (Marshall & Eccles, 1991). However, plethysmographic ratings are potentially misleading, since a large proportion of child molesters have been found not to exhibit deviant sexual arousal, nevertheless, they continue to engage in sexual abuse. Thus the criteria, if used alone, may lead to the exclusion of offenders who do not respond to child stimuli, or who voluntarily suppress sexual arousal, resulting in the identification of only a small proportion of active offenders.

As illustrated, there is an absence of a well established offender typology that has been empirically validated. This appears to be attributable to the general absence of an integrated etiological framework that distinguishes between offender subtypes and pertinent offending characteristics. The extent of investigations in this area have been limited, such that there are few data concerning what types of sex offenders exist. Finally, the literature indicate that a consensus has yet to be reached regarding where the distinctions between groups should be attempted (Knight & Prentky, 1990). This being the case, the preferential/situational molester typology is favoured at the present time, and is presented in detail below.

Characteristics of The Preferential/Situational Typology

Groth's identification of child molesters is determined according to whether the behaviour represents a continuous pattern (fixated) or a new behaviour or change (regressed). The distinction was originally made by Karpman (1954) who differentiated between men who had a permanent sexual preference for children and those who substituted them for adult partners. Groth (1978) formulated a descriptive profile pertinent to each type, and comprised a list of factors relevant to each type, for diagnostic purposes.

Essentially, the pivotal difference between subtypes was that fixated (preferential) offenders are characterised by arrested psychosexual development. In comparison, regressed (situational) offenders, after a relatively normal psychosexual development, offend when psychopathologically regressed, in response to stress. This distinction received support from Howells (1981) who favoured the more atheoretical nominations of preferential and situational for fixated and regressed child molesters respectively.

Groth (1978) defines the fixated child molester as experiencing arrested psychosocial development, due to incomplete maturational issues, that underlie and continue to influence ongoing stages of his development. His primary sexual orientation is to children and remains consistent throughout his life, with offending commencing in adolescence. He is disinterested in sexual interactions and socialisation with adults, and any such relations usually represent a digression from his standard pattern of sexual encounters, due to external pressures or circumstances.

Because his sexual inclinations are not experienced as unsettling, he is void of shame, guilt and remorse. Instead he regards his desires and behaviours as compulsions over which he has no control, and often engages in sexual thoughts and fantasises about children. By avoiding socialisation with peers, he shields himself from potential rejection, and negative emotions (e.g., inadequacy, inferiority, and anxiety), while interactions with children are more gratifying and less overwhelming.

He is usually unmarried, and if he is, it is likely to be just a convenient arrangement, a disguise or provides access to target children. His victims are often male, and he may attempt to assume a parental role, or develop a romantic relationship with his victim. His offending is characterised by premeditation, is compulsive and a habitual feature of his lifestyle, and not induced by stress. Finally, he does not regard his offending as inappropriate, just negatively sanctioned by law, reflecting firmly held

beliefs and distortions. These characteristics, representing the fixated offender's arrested psychosexual and psychosocial adjustment tend to generalise into his life.

In contrast, the regressed man has a primary sexual orientation towards adults, having experienced relatively normal psychosexual and psychosocial maturation, and is often married. However, he may be deficient in some areas, particularly intimacy skills, experiencing feelings of inadequacy or sexual inability, bringing his self image into question. His offending behaviour marks a primitive departure from his usual sexual encounters, typically precipitated by an inability to cope with current stressors. Several life stresses may be involved, including sexual problems, financial worries, conflict in close relationships, and other situational factors. A child may then function as a pseudo-adult, replacing an adult as the object of sexual desire and gratification.

The relationship is experienced as less threatening than with an age-mate, although existing adult sexual relationships will usually be maintained at the same time. His offences tend to be unplanned, are characterised by impulsivity, and occur in an episodic rather than a persistent pattern. During offending, he is usually in a state of negative affect (e.g., depressed) and may experience partial disassociation from his physical self.

In this condition, his morals and behavioural restraints, are suspended, since they run counter to his standard beliefs. He regards his sexual impulses and behaviour as abnormal and immoral, and experiences distress, resulting in feelings of guilt, shame and remorse. Conflict experienced from the violation of his standards, leads to resolution seeking through cognitive distortions, particularly as denials and minimisations (Ward, Hudson, & Marshall, 1995). It appears then, that the regressed man's offending behaviour reflects a poor attempt to handle life stresses.

In summary, the fixated (preferential) child molester, with a primary erotic orientation towards children, is characterised by a chronic and persistent pattern of offending, and seeks his own gratification, believing it to be his entitlement. On the other hand, the regressed (situational) offender, with a primary sexual preference for adults, is characterised by acute episodes of offending. His offences are usually precipitated by stresses, with the subsequent transference of sexual inclinations on to a child, in an effort to cope with situational demands.

For both men, the sexual contact with a child represents some internal psychosocial crisis. However, in the fixated male, this climaxes in adolescence, when children become preferred as sexual partners. For the regressed type, an inability to

handle life stresses can result in security and escapism being sought through sexual contact with a child. Thus, the two types of child molester are characterised by a number of differences, including experiences in developmental maturation. These appear to contribute to their separate styles of offending, but also impact upon and reflect the types of dysfunctional cognitions engaged in.

Criticisms of The Preferential/Situational Child Molester Typology:

Some authors have cited limitations of the typology on theoretical and empirical grounds (Knight & Prentky, 1990; Lanyon, 1986; Simon, Sales, Kaszniak, & Kahn, 1992) and have argued the case for a continuous dimension rather than a dichotomy (Lanyon, 1986; Simon et al., 1992). According to Simon et al., (1992) the dichotomy prevents differences among offenders within the two groups to emerge, and suppresses information about their victims, circumstances and interpersonal elements. The authors conceded that the system assists in conceptualising certain differences between the groups, but argued that its explanatory and predictive powers are limited. Specifically, it does not explain why offending occurs episodically for some offenders and persistently for others.

Simon et al., (1992) sought to empirically validate the dichotomy by incorporating into the original constructs, additional information from 136 offenders, including features of victims, situations and interpersonal elements. Subjects were grouped according to Groth's criteria, and distribution scores were generated to determine whether the sample was grouped dichotomously. The results implied that the typology's criteria yielded a unimodal, continuous distribution, rather than a bimodal orientation. The authors concluded that the typology would be more profitably approached as a continuum.

Knight and Prentky (1990) argued that the dichotomy obscured aspects of offending style, relationship with the child, strength of deviant sexual interests, and social competence. They attempted to assess whether valid and reliable typologies could be formulated for pedophiles, by developing a detailed empirical classification system. Entitled MTC: CM3, the system incorporated frequently reported features of child molester types.

The system represents a means of decision making for features of offending style, according to two major axes, and resultant decision branches, culminating in molester subtypes. Application of the 24 cells (subtypes), demonstrated that 11 of these were

either vacant or so low in frequency that they were deemed empty (Knight & Prentky, 1990). Further development is required to determine the schedule's generalisability to larger populations, and therefore, cannot be viewed as complete.

Validation of The Preferential/Situational Child Molester Typology:

Compared with other proposed typologies, the preferential/situational system has been demonstrated as containing validity in its application to offender populations. In addition, it is potentially useful in predicting an individual's likelihood of reoffending, his amenability to treatment, and in the implications of influential background factors (e.g., sexual victimisation as a child).

In establishing the viability of the system in defining child molester subtypes, empirical data to support the use of the dimension was acquired by Groth and Birnbaum (1978). They demonstrated that the system could be used to categorise a population of men convicted of sexual assault of children, as either preferential or situational. Of 175 offenders assessed, eighty-three of these were classified as fixated, and ninety-two were identified as regressed. They also determined that the offenders differed significantly on several of the features included in the list of criteria.

In terms of treatment, the dimension has some clinical value, given that it can be used for making some estimates about reoffending (Groth, 1978). Because the situational offender has frequently had some experience with gratifying age appropriate sexual relations, the prognosis is better for him than for the preferential type man. Therefore, in predicting recidivism, factors of consideration include: the relative influence of environmental, circumstantial and personal determinants.

These may be assessed by determining whether sexual interest in children is persistent or stable, indicating a preferential type or if the offending represents a new behaviour, indicating a situational offender. Thus the compulsive nature of the preferential offender implies a higher likelihood of reoffending than for his situational type counterpart, whose sexual assault of a child may have occurred for the first time.

The typology also appears to reflect some background differences between the two types of molesters. According to Handsk (1990) the greater proportion of child molesters have not been victimised as children themselves. However, in offenders who target young males, the incidence of abuse is unusually common, and the features of this group coincide with the characteristics of preferential offenders. These offenders appear to be distinguishable from other child molesters according to the presence of certain

behavioural manifestations. Anecdotal observations have frequently described the behaviours of these men as compulsive, enduring, and strongly resistant to intervention.

These reports have been supported in clinical practice by Becker (1985) who observed that molesters of young males were one of the most treatment-resistant participants in her facility. Of the individuals in her programme, 72 % of these offenders had committed a sexual assault against a child prior to the age of 19 years, with a very high rate of average victims for each offender. Impressionistic reports from intervention facilities suggest that previous sexual abuse is especially frequent in this offender group. Approximately 40 to 60 percent of these men were reported as having been victimised as youngsters (Seghorn, Boucher, & Cohen, 1983).

Knopp (1984) reported that, according to therapist estimates, 55 % of the child sex offenders in an outpatient programme had been abused, most frequently by a male childminder. Additionally, previous victimisation was not greatly apparent in young males who sexually assaulted women, yet offenders who had raped males were almost always victimised in youth. These data, when viewed in conjunction, indicate the potential for the experience of sexual abuse at childhood to be a critical risk variable for facilitating sexually assaultive behaviour towards male victims in adulthood.

Summary of The Preferential/Situational Child Molester Typology

Preferential and Situational child molesters are distinguished according to a number of features that describe the characteristics of their offending behaviours and psychological development. Processes that lead to the emergence of each type of offender are assumed to incorporate early childhood experiences, such as prior victimisation and upbringing, and their interaction with personal variables.

As illustrated, the typology has been criticised with respect to its dichotomous nature, and an alternative in the form of a continuum has been suggested, although not adequately formulated. On the other hand, the system has demonstrated some clinical validity, rendering it the most viable typology available at this preliminary stage of theory development (Hudson, Ward, & France, 1992). For these reasons, the typology is implemented in the current study, in order to classify the sample of child molesters involved.

(D) COGNITIVE FACTORS IN SEXUAL AGGRESSION AGAINST CHILDREN

The Current Status of Knowledge About Dysfunctional Cognitions

Explanations of child sexual abuse have resulted in a number of classificatory systems, typologies, and recently, more comprehensive etiological accounts. However, there is a paucity of specific theories that stem from such formulations. This is represented by a dearth of empirically-driven documentation of the natures and roles of cognitions in both the development and perpetuation of pedophilic behaviour.

The identification of faulty cognitions in child molesters is a necessary treatment goal, since the extent of attitudes and excuses used by an offender will represent his motivation for rehabilitation. Interventions require guidelines for defining effective treatment aims, and in the monitoring and assessment of changes in an offender's cognitive content. Therefore, systematic examination of cognitions is required to elucidate the nature, contents, and functions of dysfunctional cognitions in child molesters' offending behaviour.

The importance of child molesters' thoughts in sexual assault, was emphasised by Finkelhor (1979) by suggesting that coping with deviant sexual responding relies upon correct and rational thoughts. However, in a comprehensive review of the available literature, Lanyon (1986) concluded that this area remains virtually unstudied.

The available research in this area has ranged from anecdotal reports and clinical descriptions to a small number of empirically-based investigations. Empirical studies have only begun to emerge in more recent times, and have been driven by the quest to develop specific theories from methodologically sound foundations. Research conducted at the preliminary stages of inquiry has been restricted in many cases by the approach to evaluating sex offenders as a homogenous group.

As noted earlier, child molesting behaviour and its associated psychological dynamics differ from other forms of sexual assault. Unfortunately, previous studies have not distinguished between different types of sex offenders, inhibiting the identification and analysis of child molesters' cognitions. A handful of investigations into their dysfunctional cognitions, have examined differences between child molesters, other sex offender types and various non-offender populations.

There is now growing realisation that even amongst child molesters, differences in cognitions may be also be associated with different offender subtypes. Consequently some researchers have begun to focus on identifying patterns of cognitions according to child sex offender subtypes, particularly those identified according to the typology of preferential/situational molesters.

The following review of cognitive factors in child molesters is arranged according to two themes identified in the literature. Firstly, entrenched, maladaptive beliefs and attitudes will be examined, followed by more surface level distortions.

Maladaptive Beliefs and Attitudes in Child Molesters

Features of Maladaptive Beliefs:

Maladaptive beliefs and attitudes appear to reflect deep-seated components in an individual's general value system or schemata, and are likely to be acquired early in his development. Anecdotal reports have indicated a high frequency of maladaptive attitudes and beliefs presented by molesters (Abel, Becker, & Cunningham-Rathner, 1984; Abel, Mittelman, & Becker, 1985; Finkelhor, 1984; Stermac & Segal, 1989). Commonly observed beliefs, include the notions that "a child will benefit from sexual contact", or "children want sexual contact with adults". Consequently, their presence is thought to be influential in the onset of offending, playing a facilitative role, and in aiding its maintenance (Abel, Becker, Cunningham-Rathner, Rouleau, Kaplan, & Reich, 1984).

Investigations into child molesters' attitudes are sparse. However, these have identified some prevalent maladaptive beliefs in child molesters by comparing them with non-molesters, and more recently, according to child molester subtypes. These studies have sought to determine whether child molesters' perceptions of sexual interactions with children differ in ways that concur with anecdotal and clinical observations. Other studies have examined their generalised perceptions of children and adults and how these differ from non-molesters. These have demonstrated that molesters construe other people differently from non-molesters and other sex offender types (Howells, 1979; Horley, 1988).

Research Findings:

Child molesters' cognitive constructs were investigated by Howells (1979) to determine whether they differed from non-molesters in their interpersonal perceptions of others. The premise on which the expected difference was based was that offenders' preexisting beliefs about children as potential partners could facilitate offending behaviour. A sample of ten institutionalised heterosexual molesters undergoing therapy were compared with ten matched incarcerated non-sexual offenders, who were also receiving treatment.

Two forms of the Repertory Grid (Kelly, 1955) were used to examine the subjects' perceptions of personal constructs associated with adult males, females and children. The first grid contained ten male elements (e.g., brother, father, attractive boy), and the second grid contained ten female elements (e.g., mother, sister, attractive girl). Participants nominated a different person in their lives to personify each grid element and identified commonalities between two people, and how they differed from a third person. The responses were categorised according to ten constructs (e.g., self sufficiency, status, intellective, sexual, morality, appearance, egoism) which were dimensionalised as either dominance or submission.

The content analysis of the subjects' responses indicated that, compared with non-sexual offenders, child molesters were more extreme in their ratings. They tended to rate children as more submissive, more compliant and less threatening than adults. Conversely, adults were rated by the molesters as more threatening, overbearing and more dominant. These constructs of adults and children were regarded by the author as indicative of child molesters' more generalised perceptions of children, such that they are not just sexual in nature and are in contrast with the way in which adults are perceived.

Specifically it was suggested that, in consigning positive attributes to children, the child molester's idealisation of children (e.g., childhood innocence) may represent his pursuit of a context which allows him to exercise non-sexual mastery and dominance over another. In contrast, since the molesters personified adults according to negative attributes, their offences could reflect a concurrent attempt to escape from the burden of demands placed by adult relationships. Howells concluded by speculating that sexual attraction to children occurs in a complex manner, and the meaning of the victim for the offender encompasses more than physical or sexual attraction.

In a replication study (Horley, 1988) the differences between molesters and non-molesters in their ratings of dominance and submission, were not repeated. However the

sample of child molesters in the second study (Horley, 1988) included abusers of both females and male children, and these were not separated for independent analysis.

Because child molesters are not a homogenous group, they may also be differentiated according to the gender of their victims, to determine if variations in victim preference also relate to differences in the perceptions of children and adults.

Results of the studies, when viewed in conjunction, suggest that constructs of dominance and submission may be particularly salient to abusers of females, rather than child molesters in general. Investigations of personal constructs may be useful in distinguishing heterosexual molesters from non-offenders. The studies then are valuable for having identified and highlighted the importance of victim gender in examining child molesters' cognitions.

Comparison groups, including non-molesters, and other sex offender types, sufficiently matched on variables, for example, age, intellectual and psychiatric functioning, adds value to research. Systematic documentation of sexual and non-sexual constructs of child molesters could be compared for differences and similarities with control groups, to enable the identification of their casual relations. A recent study of social attitudes demonstrates the use of comparison groups in assessing the extent of child molesters' attitudes about the acceptability of sexual contact with children. In this study (Stermac & Segal, 1989) the general observation that child molesters endorse permissive beliefs about sexual contact with children was confirmed. To determine whether child molesters differed from groups of non-molesters in their attitudes and perceptions about sexual contact with children, a variety of control groups were used. The 180 participants included child molesters, institutional and socioeconomic controls, and community groups experienced in prosecuting or treating offenders and victims.

A unique approach to the assessment of cognitions was employed by constructing a series of twelve factually-based vignettes, abstracted from offence descriptions in clinical reports. The vignettes depicted encounters involving sexual contact between adults and children. Each scenario presented a seven year old child (gender relevant to each subject's sexual orientation) and included two independent variables: the degree of sexual contact and the child's response to the offender.

Degrees of sexual contact included: (1) touching, (2) rubbing genitals over clothing, (3) fondling and undressing, and (4) genital contact with ejaculation. The child's response included: (1) smiling, (2) passive/no response, and (3) crying with resistance. The men read the vignettes and were questioned about the perceived

complicity and consent of the child, possible benefit and harm to the child, the offender's culpability, and the extent of appropriate punishment. The six questions represented primary cognitive beliefs that have been identified by child molesters as salient to their offendings. Participants rated their degree of agreement on a five-point likert scale.

The results revealed that child molesters perceived more benefit for the victim, greater complicity from the child in initiation, and attributed less responsibility to the offender than other respondent groups. Child molesters' responses were partially moderated by the type of response exhibited by the victim. All subject groups displayed a concordant pattern when rating a clearly negative response from the child (crying). However, when the response was neutral (ambiguous) or positive, child molesters diverged the greatest from the other groups. The authors suggested that in the absence of an overtly negative signal from the child, an offender's preexisting attitudes may emerge (Stermac et al., 1989), while simultaneously engaging in a self serving distortion, by perceiving acceptance of the activity from the child.

Child molesters' greater acceptance of the sexual contacts received convergent support from ratings on the Abel Becker Cognitions Scale (Abel et al., 1984) (see review, section (E)). This was used to determine the extent to which the participants endorsed general pedophilotypic beliefs. Child molesters were found to endorse more pedophilotypic beliefs than the other participant groups. These results indicated that the child molesters' perceptions regarding sexual interactions with children embraced a more encompassing range of behaviours than those acceptable to non-molesters. These differences concurred with previous findings (e.g., Howells 1979) and may suggest the presence of certain meaning structures or schemata, involved in the development of child sex offenders' perceptions about sexual contact with children.

Stermac et al., (1989) suggested that particular beliefs may contribute to the etiological process of child molestation, serving to legitimise their deviant behaviour. Accordingly, such beliefs may simply be rationalisations arising subsequent to an offence, or even an epiphenomena of deviant sexual responding, which once eliminated, will effect a spontaneous removal of maladaptive cognitions. However, whether they emerge as rationalisations after, or exist prior to an initial offence, and facilitate its enactment remains unclear (Stermac et al; 1989). The authors regarded their findings as preliminary, and recommended that further examinations of child sex offenders' cognitions include their perceptions of children, and how they interact in their assaults.

Finally, these authors highlighted the need for assessment of child molesters' cognitions according to offender subtypes, which had not previously been considered in the research. They reasoned that the potential interaction of cognitive elements in different offenders may explain why they offend for different reasons, such that the variations in cognitive mediation enlisted by offenders may be associated with different offending patterns. Specifically, preferential type offenders will be more concerned with issues regarding the legality of their acts, such as a victim's age or consensual status. Situational type molesters, however, would engage at another level of distortion, by attempting to rationalise and justify their offences.

Differences in maladaptive cognitions between preferential and situational offender subtypes were examined by Hudson, Jones, and Ward (1996), in light of previous observations (Abel et al, 1985; 1989). These have demonstrated that the greatest variation in pedophilic attitudes between child molesters and non-molesters, have concerned "child-adult sex helps the child" beliefs. This finding indicates a particularly influential group of distortions, with those concerning victim impact and harm to be central. Consequently, it was reasoned that the level of an offender's distortion will increase with both the duration of his offences and the number of molestations (Hudson et al., 1996).

Based on these considerations, Hudson et al., (1996) hypothesised that preferential offenders would exhibit more maladaptive beliefs than situational men. The higher numbers of beliefs endorsed by preferential offenders would also correlate positively with their offending histories and the number of their victims. The 92 participants were all incarcerated child molesters, undergoing treatment.

The men were administered an array of tests, including measures of the ABCS (Abel et al., 1989) to assess pedophilic beliefs, and the Davis Interpersonal Reactivity (Davis, 1983) to assess levels of empathy. No significant differences between the two groups were found for measures of empathy, indicating that the ability to empathise with the victim's experience is not a distinguishable feature for either subtype in the sample.

However, as expected, the preferential offenders endorsed a greater number of pedophilic attitudes than did the situational offenders. A significant correlation between the number of victims and the ABCS ratings was also obtained, suggesting that the greater the number of victims, the greater the number of beliefs were affirmed (Hudson et al., 1996). The authors speculated that this finding lends credence to the notion that such thinking serves to maintain offending, rather than cause its initiation.

In addition, it was suggested that the levels of cognitive dysfunctions engaged in, are functionally related to the amount of offences committed. The authors concluded that these results supported Segal and Stermac's (1989) assertion that differences are present in varying offender typologies. These are reflected by the endorsement of different distortions, since preferential offenders displayed more cognitions centred on issues of morality and victim harm than did situational offenders.

In summary, maladaptive beliefs in child molestation appear to represent features of offender's value system or schemata, and as such may be a fundamental component of a man's thinking, and are likely to be resistant to change. Beliefs which endorse the acceptability of child-adult sexual contact, do not exist in a vacuum and relate to more global perceptions molesters have about children, involving the idealisation of childhood.

As demonstrated, child molesters differ from non-molester offenders and non-offender groups, but closer examination reveals that child molesters do not exhibit a single pattern or offending profile. Instead, preferential offenders have been found to endorse more pedophilic type beliefs than situational offenders, and tend to be concerned with the legal aspects of their activities than situational men, whose dysfunctions more often appear as distortions of offence features than as entrenched beliefs.

Cognitive Distortions of Offence Features

Features of Cognitive Distortions:

Knowledge of molesters' cognitions has suffered from a paucity of investigations into the content and structure of surface level distortions and rationalisations (Stermac et al., 1990). Recently, several studies have examined the contents of child molesters' distortions, including denials, minimisations, attributions of blame and justificatory excuses. The contents of such distortions are various, but appear to be more situation-specific than maladaptive beliefs. Their specific contents are apparently susceptible to change, suggesting that they are processed at a different level of cognition than more stable or schematic-type beliefs.

Essentially, distortions of offence features serve as mechanisms that reduce an offender's sense of responsibility for his acts, and the excuses are used to explain why he turned to a child for gratification. Since remorsefulness for molestation is demonstrated

by a small number of child sex offenders (approximately 14%) it appears that these mechanisms are effective in reducing culpability to some extent (Wormith, 1983).

The role of distortions in sexual assault has been accorded importance by some authors. According to Quinsey (1986) the justificatory excuses offered by child molesters are consequences rather than causes of their behaviour, but acknowledged that at the time, there were no empirical data to support either position. According to Abel, Becker, & Cunningham-Rathner (1984) cognitive distortions reflect offenders' self-statements that enable them to engage in minimisation, denial, rationalisation and justification of their deviant behaviour. Such cognitions do not directly cause offending but are processes involved in justifying a man's sexually deviant behaviour, and its continuation. Sex offenders avoid validating their cognitions with other adults, enabling them to maintain their distorted thinking and continue offending in the absence of contrary views.

Cognitive distortions have been conceptualised by Barbaree (1991) as involved in a psychological process including aspects of mistaken attribution, rationalisation, and selective memory, which manifests in the form of denials and minimisations. While both result from the same processing mechanisms, they are presented differently. Denials are determined according to whether a man accepts his improprieties or not, is measured categorically, and usually relates to judicial features of a case. Minimisations, however, appear in degrees, and although related to the facts, are concerned with issues of responsibility and victim harm.

Finally, in addition to features of denials and minimisations are processes of distortions that involve mistaken attribution, selective attention and interpretations of the child's behaviour or responses. These aspects of distorted cognitions in child sex offenders are described in detail below.

Types of Cognitive Distortions:

Sometimes, when confronted with accusations, a child sex offender may engage in denial, of which there are three types. He may claim that the abuse did not occur, constituting a distortion in the form of outright denial. Alternatively, he may argue that an offence did not take place, because the victim consented to the activity, or willingly participated. Thirdly, denial may be apparent in a man who claims that the activity was not of a sexual nature, and although physical touching took place, it was for a legitimate reason, for example, he was comforting an unhappy child.

Another offender may admit to the offence but will minimise his responsibility by downgrading certain aspects of his behaviour and the effects on his victim. Minimising often involve attempts to rationalise or justify the deviant behaviour, by attributing responsibility for offending to a host of causes. Minimisations of responsibility commonly emerge as justifications, reflecting an offender's attempt to convince himself and others of powerful factors outside his control. Typically, responsibility is placed elsewhere by blaming the victim, for having invited the assault through behaving provocatively, or by seducing the offender.

Minimisations of responsibility may appear as external attributions, such as stress, alcohol intoxication, and an unavailable or unwilling spouse. An offender may blame some internal state, such as prior victimisation in childhood, current emotional problems or an "unquenchable" sexual appetite. Whether the man blames external factors or internal states, the result is the same, the locus of control is shifted away from himself. Attributing blame elsewhere enables an offender to avoid accepting full responsibility for his crime, and serves to abate feelings of guilt and remorse as a result.

A second class of minimisations concerns attempts to downgrade the extent of sexual contact engaged in during offending. Included are underestimations of the degree to which the victim was coerced or forced to participate in the encounter and the extent of sexual intrusiveness upon the victim. An offender may misrepresent the frequency with which he abused a specific victim, as well as the extent of previous sex offences.

A third class of minimisations concerns the harm and potential damage inflicted upon the victim. Child molesters often fail to recognise the effects of the abuse on the victim, including the possible long term ramifications of emotional distress and other negative consequences. This lack of empathy for their victim's experience typically accompanies minimisations, and appears initially to arise as a consequence of distortions.

Processes that are related to distortions, are the offender's perceptions of the victim, affecting the interpretation or misinterpretation of the child's response. The molester's construal of the child's responsiveness is in part contingent on the child's behaviour at the time, such that his/her behaviour may be interpreted in sexual terms, albeit self serving. A child's action, such as sitting with parted legs, may be perceived as an invitation to sexual contact, as might silence be interpreted as enjoyment during the assault. Interpreting the behaviour of the victim in a manner that allows the offence to ensue, is intertwined in the processes involving denials and minimisations.

In sum, by mutually reinforcing one another, the presence of distortions and the absence of empathy are thought to contribute to the perpetuation of the man's offence behaviour. This pattern of dysfunctional thinking, combined with a lack of appropriate affect regarding his victim, may manifest itself in a failure for remorse in an offender, further increasing the likelihood of reoffending.

Research Findings:

Observations of distortions in a child molester population were reported by Pollock and Hashmall (1991). The content and structure of the offenders' excuses were examined, on the expectation that these would generate from a finite number of justificatory themes with defined parameters and structure. From the clinical records of 86 incarcerated subjects, over 250 explanatory statements were identified (for example, the victim consented, the offender was intoxicated). From these declarations, a set of 21 discrete excuses and six thematic classes were generated and used to devise an "excuse syntax" for defining the structure of the offenders' explanations of their acts.

The syntax was utilised for assessing aspects of defensiveness, logical continuity and personal responsibility. The themes included: (1) mitigating factors: situational, (2) sex with children is not wrong, (3) the incident was nonsexual, (4) mitigating factors: psychological, (5) blaming the victim, and (6) denial. The 21 excuses were organised hierarchically according to their frequency of endorsement by offenders. Derived from the thematic classes, the classes of excuses were designed to delineate the logical structure of the explanatory statements. The authors suggested that the system is potentially useful in assisting in the judgement of an offender's levels of responsibility, defensiveness, and logical consistency of his excuses.

Barbaree and Cortoni (1993), in light of the above findings, investigated the minimisations and denials of child molesters and rapists. Included were 30 adults and 20 adolescents, 84% of whom were child molesters. Data were accrued via a Denial and Minimisation Checklist, which the authors had developed for use with both adolescent and adult offenders. This device contains the following assumptions. First, denial is regarded as a categorical variable, while minimisations vary in degrees and require grading. Second, denial is associated with factual aspects of offending, while minimisations are concerned with the offender's taking of responsibility, prior to offending and perceived harm to the victim.

Measures of denial included three forms: (a) complete denial that the offence occurred, (b) the sexual act had occurred but it was not illegal, and therefore did not constitute an offence (e.g., his victim consented). The final form of denial involved (c) admitting to the contact, but claiming that the nature of touching was not sexual, and had occurred for plausible reasons (e.g., he was applying medication to the child).

Minimisations included measures of (a) whether the victim will recover, whether the victim was sexually experienced (so doesn't constitute an offence, and therefore, will have no consequences), and benefits for the victim outweigh the costs. Minimisations of (b) prior offending, included the man's underreporting of the true number of his victims, the frequency, and extent of his offences, and degrees of sexual contact involved. Minimisations of (c) responsibility, included blaming the victim, and attributing blame to external and internal factors.

To diminish responsibility, offenders' attributions included external/situational factors, such as intoxication, stress, outside pressures, and provocation. Other forms of blame included non-sexual problems precipitating offending, previous victimisation, childhood trauma, hormones and sex drive. The results revealed that Deniers accounted for 60% of the adults, and 40% of the adolescents. Thirty-seven percent of adults and 50% of adolescents engaged in minimisations, with a small minority (1 adult and 2 adolescents) accepting full responsibility. Although not significant, the general trend was for adults to enlisted in more forms of minimisation and denial than the adolescents.

According to the authors, the data represent the nature of denial and minimisations, but do not explain the operations resulting in denial, obfuscation of events and voluntary control over responses, or conscious elements. They suggested that subconscious operations may be involved, such that denials and minimisations arise from processes involving distortions, misattributions, justifications and perceptions in order to evade responsibility. Unfortunately, distortions presented by the child molesters were not separately assessed in the above study. However, since child molesters comprised the majority of subjects, the results are noteworthy.

Kennedy and Grubin (1992) differentiated a sample of 102 incarcerated sex offenders, including 56 child molesters, into four groups according to styles of denial and minimisations. The study was intended to identify patterns of denial and to ascertain whether these patterns would describe offender typologies. To assess the impact of denials on treatment outcome, the relationships between these patterns and previous offendings or willingness for treatment were examined.

Participants were requested to provide a narrative of the incident they were convicted for, followed by a series of questions, designed to elicit aspects of their attitudes. Their responses were then rated on several denial scores, generated for the purpose of the study. Of the 102 offenders, 1/3 denied any sexual contact, and only 1/2 of the admitters accepted responsibility, with 1/4 maintaining that the victim benefited from the encounters. All subjects were grouped into offender subtypes, with complete “Deniers”, comprising a single group. The remainder of subjects were grouped according to cluster analyses, since they required further delineation.

“Rationalisers” tended to admit to a deviant sexual preference, and were the least likely to blame an irrational mental state, the victim or other parties for their improprieties, and frequently claimed to have helped the child. “Externalisers” most frequently blamed the victim and other people for their offences, and tended to deny that harm had been inflicted, and were often concerned with judicial issues. “Internalisers”, while fully admitting their offence and subsequent victim harm, commonly blamed an uncharacteristic mental state or third parties, but did not blame their victims.

The offender groups were analysed for their patterns of offending, and the style of denial used, revealing that Rationalisers comprised a substantial proportion of the molesters, especially of boys, and were the largest recidivist group. Externalisers were predominantly abusers of young females, while Internalisers were frequently heterosexual incest offenders. Absolute Deniers were largely comprised of assaulters of adult females or rapists. These results indicate that different types of child molesters can be identified and grouped according to characteristics of their offendings and the associated cognitive distortions.

Cognitive distortions were investigated by Gudjonsson (1990) by examining the relationship between child sex offenders distorted beliefs and the degree to which they attributed blame to outside factors. It was expected that the more the behaviour is justified, the more likely it is for blame to be ascribed to the victim and social factors, in an offender’s attempts to evade responsibility. Two forms of assessment were utilised, the ABCS (Abel et al., 1989) and the Gudjonsson Revised Blame Attribution Inventory (Gudjonsson & Singh, 1989) with 25 men who had offended against a family member.

The Blame Inventory assessed three major types of attributions: (a) External factors, (b) Mental-elemental (such as states of anxiety, depression, and inadequate self-control), and (c) Guilt attributions (the degree of remorse). Ratings from the ABCS showed highly significant correlations between distorted beliefs and externalisations of

blame, while the other forms of attribution, mental-elemental and guilt, did not reveal significant relations with beliefs.

The author suggested that the relationship between beliefs and externalisation of blame may result from inadequate socialisation in the developmental stages, but may also indicate broader personality and attitudinal factors associated with personality disorders. Essentially, the investigation demonstrated that the more the deviant behaviour is justified through maladaptive beliefs, more instances of externalisations blame are likely to ensue.

Investigations into surface level distortions have demonstrated that a high proportion of child molesters engage in some form of denial or minimisations. Different forms of distortions have also been associated with groups of offenders according to the characteristics of their offending patterns. Information relating offence characteristics and cognitions will assist interventions by enabling generalised predictions to be made about cognitions requiring targeting, especially for a uncooperative offender.

Minimisations also represent a form of cognitive operation, in which the man attempts to process his behaviour in ways that are more acceptable to him, through rationalisations. The conflict between the man's behaviour and his sense of morality, requires resolution at a cognitive level of processing in order to abate the negative affect associated with the conflict. Achieved through distortions, these can develop into a pattern which may become increasingly acceptable to the offender as his offendings continue, and the conflict experienced lessens over time.

Summary of Cognitive Factors in Sexual Offending Against Children

Dysfunctional cognitions play a critical role in child molestation, and research has only recently begun to uncover some of the complex dynamics involved in this type of crime. However, the literature review has demonstrated compelling evidence that the majority of child molesters engage in some form of dysfunctional thinking processes which enable the onset and perpetuation of offending. As demonstrated in the review, two general forms of dysfunctional cognitions have emerged; maladaptive beliefs and surface level distortions, and these appear to result from different levels of processing. Examinations of child sex offender's cognitions and their related effects, require reliable assessment devices for their elicitation and identification, and these are reviewed next.

(E) ASSESSMENT OF COGNITIVE FEATURES IN CHILD MOLESTERS

Present Status of Cognitive Assessment Measures

Assessment of an offender's dysfunctional cognitions is critical to therapeutic success. Their identification is important for the purposes of modification, and as indicators of his potential for change, since the extent of his denials or minimisations is believed to reflect his commitment to participate in his own rehabilitation. Assessment of these cognitive features is potentially useful in predicting his risk of reoffending, in that denial appears to increase its likelihood. Therefore, accurate assessment devices are imperative to the elicitation and identification of faulty cognitions to be targeted during treatment, and to evaluate the success of treatment, designed to change faulty thinking.

However, compared with other areas of assessment (e.g., sexual arousal patterns), few investigations have addressed the need to develop clinically viable means to assess sex offenders' cognitions. Empirically valid and reliable assessment measures will ideally derive from a sound knowledge base regarding the nature and content of dysfunctional thinking. Since knowledge in this area is relatively limited, this may account for the paucity in devices available for measuring child molesters' cognitions.

To accurately identify and analyse dysfunctional thoughts, the development of a more objective assessment tool than those currently available is required (Marshall & Eccles, 1991). However, until more sophisticated and psychometrically sound measures for assessing cognitions are developed, we are limited in our understanding of these factors in sexual offending (Murphy, 1990; Stermac & Segal, 1989).

The major shortcoming associated with the majority of the assessment devices currently being implemented, is that they are quite transparent, and socially acceptable responses are easily identified by respondents. This may explain the lack of consistent findings across studies, and account for why differences between offenders' and non-offenders' attitudes, beliefs and perspectives have not always been observed (Stermac & Segal, 1989).

The most prominent published system used to measure child molesters' beliefs is the Abel and Becker Cognitions Scale (ABCS) (Abel et al., 1984, 1989; Murphy, 1990). Although frequently used in clinical practice, studies have revealed it is limited in its application, and should therefore, be used in conjunction with other devices that assess

cognitions. However, given its prominence as an assessment tool in many intervention programmes and research endeavours, a full examination is warranted.

The Abel - Becker Cognitions Scale

Features of The ABCS:

The ABCS (Abel et al., 1984) includes 29 items which are presented in the form of a statement, and represent commonly observed beliefs held by child molesters. The items are intended to measure the degree to which an individual endorses a certain belief or attitude. For each item, the extent of endorsement is measured by having the offender rate his level of agreement on a five-point likert scale, with a high level of agreement, represented by a score of 1 (strongly agree), and a low degree of agreement represented by 5 (strongly disagree).

Types of beliefs depicted on the scale include: (1) a child who does not physically resist the adult's sexual advances really wants sex, (2) having sex with an adult is a good way to teach children about sex, (3) a child who does not disclose to others that he or she is having sex with an adult enjoys the activity and wants it to continue, and (4) a child who asks an adult about sex really wants to have sex with an adult and wants it to continue, to illustrate a few.

These items, at first glance, appear to contain good face validity (Murphy, 1990). However, psychometric data demonstrating the reliability and validity of the scale, although available, are limited. Abel, Gore, Holland, Camp, Becker, and Rathner (1989) supplied preliminary data regarding cognitive distortions which had acceptable internal consistency and distinguished between a sample of 240 child abusers and 134 control subjects.

Gore (1988) also evaluated the utility of the scale, demonstrating at least partial support for its application. The device was found to significantly distinguish between child molesters and other types of sexual abusers, and a satisfactory degree of test-retest reliabilities was attained. These findings were concurred upon by Segal and Stermac (1987) who also revealed that the scale separated child molesters from rapists of adult females and several non sex offender control groups (Murphy, 1990).

Limitations of The ABCS:

The ABCS, despite its prominence as an assessment device in clinical practice, contains certain limitations. Firstly, the items are extremely obvious, and an offender's responses could be influenced by social desirability, particularly if a reward is anticipated, such as an early release from incarceration. In order to obtain accurate information concerning an offender's cognitions, the development of a more objective device has been called for (Langevin, 1991). Such a device for measuring attitudes and distortions must avoid the influence of test-taking response sets, or incorporate a means of assessing test-taking attitudes (Langevin, 1991).

Langevin (1991) assessed the items on the (ABCS) scale for the possible influence of social desirability. Because all the scale items followed the same alignment, a negative response set bias was also predicted. The attitudes from 45 child molesters (including 26 incest offenders, and 15 non-familial abusers) were assessed for social desirability response sets. The ABCS scores revealed that only a few offenders either endorsed (strong agreement) the beliefs or responded to them indifferently (neither agree nor disagree). However, the majority (75%) of responses contested the beliefs (strongly disagree).

Finally, aggregated ratings revealed that 81% of the child molesters sampled did not endorse the beliefs presented on the scale, but actually strongly disagreed with them. The results were taken to reflect the presence of a very influential response bias, and the author concluded that the scale requires revision before being applied to a greater offending population.

Another shortcoming of the ABCS is that it appears only to identify the presence of maladaptive beliefs/attitudes concerning sexual contact with children, and does not appear to systematically evaluate surface level distortions. Neidigh et al., (1992) attempted a more systematic, data-based exploration of the nature and content of surface level distortions and rationalisations in a group of 101 preferential outpatient child molesters. Participants were administered an open-ended questionnaire, requesting them to provide a narrative of their thoughts, ideas and attitudes during their offences.

Approximately 357 distortions emerged from the narratives, and were collapsed into 38 distinct categories according to statements which were equivalent in meaning. The types of distortions elicited, varied in frequency, from as many as 25 % of offenders (for example, "she enjoyed it", or "this won't harm or affect her in any way") to

distortions that were more idiosyncratic in nature, presented by 1% of offenders (for example, “it will be a one time occasion”).

While several of the 38 items concurred with previous findings (Abel et al., 1984), many of the statements were idiosyncratic and particular to the individual offender. This observation highlights the need for identifying and targeting dysfunctional cognitions at the level of the individual, rather than depending upon anecdotal generalisations offered in clinical literature (Murphy, 1990). Moreover, the idiosyncratic character of many of the distortions indicated the existence of a difference between surface distortions and deeper more fundamental beliefs.

The authors argued that the ABCS, by presenting the items as statements, measures only general or deeper level beliefs. Because of the distinction between entrenched beliefs and surface level distortions, the scale was deemed unsuitable in assessing the latter type, as these vary amongst individuals. Verification was obtained through examining the offenders’ pre-treatment scores on the ABCS. Only 42% of the men had strongly endorsed any statement, with a mean number of endorsement at 1.8.

The open-ended device, however, revealed that all the subjects agreed with at least one concept, with a mean number of distortions at 3.5. This suggests that the majority of offenders do not endorse maladaptive beliefs, but appear to distort surface level cognitions in order to accommodate the notion that their own offending is exceptional. Although the findings are limited by certain aspects of cognitive functioning that were not examined, (e.g., the child’s perceived response), the results provide a starting point for subsequent attempts at the assessment of offenders’ cognitions.

Summary of Assessment Devices

In examining dysfunctional cognitions of child molesters, the ABSC is useful in identifying the presence of generalised maladaptive beliefs, rather than surface level distortions. To examine a wider range of dysfunctional cognitions, more sophisticated devices are required to enable the detection of offender-specific thinking which emerges from a perpetrator’s own disclosure. In light of these considerations, the following model offers a comprehensive system for describing child molesters cognitions. It is, therefore, especially appropriate for use with an offender’s self disclosure, within the context of an interview or written script.

(F) A MODEL OF DYSFUNCTIONAL COGNITIONS

Introduction To The Model

Fon (1996) has developed a classification system for describing dysfunctional cognitions presented by child sex offenders (see Appendix I). The model surpasses earlier systems by extending the categorisation scheme beyond content factors only. Essentially a multilevel system, the model encompasses a broader contextual framework for assessing cognitions, by including temporal factors, information processing styles, cognitive contents, and general styles of communication.

Transcripts from pretreatment offence history interviews with 20 incarcerated male child sex offenders, attending the Kia Marama Sex Offender Treatment Program at Rolleston Prison (Hudson, Marshall, Ward, Johnston, & Jones, 1995) provided the protocols for developing the model. These interviews, included in the programmes initial assessment procedures, were conducted by each man's group therapist, and examined aspects of their offending experiences in detail.

The transcripts were analysed via grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), a qualitative, data-driven method that employs analytic procedures for inductively deriving a theory that is grounded in the phenomenon it characterises. Involved is the systematic examination of data, which enables the theoretical makeup (e.g., concepts, types and relationships) of the phenomenon under exploration, to emerge from the data.

Central to the theory is constant comparative analysis, the inductive generation of concepts and categories, done by examining similarities and differences within the data. These are deductively verified, by collecting and coding additional data, and when these data fall outside existing categories, further categories are created. The process is repeated until the categories comfortably accommodate any new data.

Procedures in The Model's Development

During the initial phase in the model's development, passages from offenders' dialogues were divided into meaning units (statements), reflecting aspects of each man's offending history, victims, offences, lifestyle factors and concurrent life events. The paraphrased units were then reduced to over 300 concepts, defined by similarities and dissimilarities in their meaning. These concepts were compiled into 48 provisional categories by grouping them into clusters according to their similarities in meaning.

Initial list items formed these categories, and subsequent items were compared with, and assigned to any relevant categories. In the absence of a categorical match, further themes were developed. Deductive analysis was used to verify the reliability of the provisional categories during open coding by applying the categories to meaning units from unused protocols, and new categories were formed for uncodable concepts.

The final collection of categories resulted from examining similarities and differences among provisional categories, and where appropriate, categories were refined. Categories were collapsed if they appeared as defining features or subcategories of another, and further categories were created to encompass several categories at a higher level of abstraction.

Refinement of the final categories continued until new data fell into existing categories without revealing new categories, properties or relationships (saturation). Saturated categories were defined in terms of mutually exclusive features, thus additional concepts could be classified to one category only.

Relationships between the resulting categories were established to formulate the initial version of the model. Through an intuitive process, different forms were formulated, tested and reconstructed until the final model which was sensitive to data with heuristic value evolved. Data were continuously compared to model formulations throughout, and fine tuning and modifications were made as required.

Features of The Model

The model represents four levels of analysis: (a) Offence Chain, (b) Cognitive Operations, (c) Cognitive Content and (d) Meta-variables. The offence chain, the core concept, “anchors” cognitive functioning in time, and reflects a temporal sequence of events and actions leading to offending. These are consistent with the four phases of the Relapse Prevention model (Pithers, 1990) and include Background Factors, High Risk Situation, Lapse and Relapse.

At each stage in the chain, the offender's behavioural and cognitive responses to events, persons or situations influence his progression to a relapse. Ultimately, this classification enables the identification and assessment of an offender's dysfunctional cognitions to be made within the context of his own offence cycle. The examination of cognitive functioning is made at the three subsequent levels of analysis that identify and measure dysfunctional aspects of thinking that emerge from an offender's disclosure.

The examination of an offender's transcript commences with cognitive operations. These represent the methods by which information content is conveyed or expressed, and refers to 'how' the offender presents information concerning his offending, offences and victims. Seven categories were formulated, and include: Describing, Explaining, Interpreting, Evaluating, Denying, Minimising and Planning.

Cognitive content describes offenders' attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, represented by three different focal areas (categories): the Self, Victim or Situation. Self-related content is either Internal or External in emphasis. Internal categorisations include responses concerning the offender's mental, affective, cognitive or behavioural state, according to five subcategories.

These are: Personality, Psychological State, Behaviour, Sexual Attitudes/History, and Psychological Disorders. External content refers to influential factors outside of the internal state, and includes four subcategories: Significant Relationship, Family, Other Relationships, and Lifestyle Factors.

Victim-related content involves the offender's attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of the victim. Included are nine subcategories: Behaviour, Personality, Response to Abuse, Attitude to Offender, Relationship with Offender, Effect/Impact of Abuse, Psychological State, Family Relationships, Sexual Attitudes/History. The final content area, Situation concerns contextual features, including the actions of others, the location and time of the offence, and is not subcategorised.

The Meta-variables reflect the overall communication style with which the offender discloses his offending. Four subcategories include: Detail, Euphemisms, Concreteness, and Passivity. Each meta-variable represents a different aspect or dimension of language use on which the protocols are rated. Several ratings (on a scale from 1 to 7) of each meta-variable are made during the classification of a protocol as the style of presentation may change over the course of the interview or self-report (for example, through therapist prompting or decreased demand characteristics).

Summary of The Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions

The model (Fon, 1996) provides a means for assessing features of offenders' dysfunctional cognitions at an unprecedented level of depth. Therapeutic assessment interviews provided the protocols for the model's development. It is, therefore, appropriate for categorising cognitions that emerge from offenders' own accounts of their offending, and has been employed as an exploratory device in the present study.

(G) COGNITIVE DECONSTRUCTION IN CHILD MOLESTERS

Introduction to The Theory

Maladaptive beliefs, distorted thinking, and a lack of empathy, are thought to contribute to the initiation and maintenance of sexual assault. However, a specific theoretical formulation is required to explain how these deficits develop and emerge in the context of sexual assault. Also, whether these operations preexist and facilitate offending, or arise post facto, in order to justify ongoing behaviour, is yet to be elucidated. The theory of Cognitive Deconstruction (Ward, Hudson, & Marshall, 1995) by integrating distorted thinking and emotional deficits, proposes to explain their roles in the initiation and perpetuation of child molestation (Ward et al., 1995).

Cognitive Deconstruction as An Escape Strategy in Habitual Behaviours

Central to the theory is the notion that child sex offenders engage in a cognitively deconstructed state, effecting the facilitation and maintenance of abuse. Characteristic changes in affect, thinking, motivation and behaviour result, and in a susceptible individual, enhance the risk of offending. Cognitive deconstruction was originally conceptualised by Baumeister (1989; 1990; 1991) from studies on suicide, alcoholism, sexual masochism, and binge eating, and is pivotal in his theory of escape from self (Ward et al, 1995).

Essentially, negative self evaluations are avoided in order to escape from traumatic or unpleasant experiences. Habitual behaviours are frequently motivated by escape from unpleasant conditions, particularly negative self-appraisals. This avoidance strategy may become a permanent mechanism for coping with continued unpleasant experiences if temporary relief occurs, and the subsequent reinforcement of the escape behaviour ensures its continuation.

Central to this theory are hierarchically arranged levels of cognitive processing, ranging from concrete to highly abstract levels of meaning, accompanied by specific aims and strategies. Attention is thought to activate particular levels, therefore, when self awareness is averted, attention moves down from higher to concrete levels. Self evaluation is then suspended, and the resultant negative affect which would otherwise occur, is avoided.

Negative emotions, resulting from internal conflict, frequently effect a shift to lower levels of self awareness and cognitive processing. Sexual activity, in reducing self awareness to a purely sensory focus, is effective in escaping unpleasant states or negative thoughts arising from the conflict between behaviour and ideals.

Cognitive deconstruction concerns the escape from the implications of stressful or traumatic experiences. Accordingly, an effective escape strategy will become an entrenched coping mechanism for a particular issue, but will also generalise as a means of dealing with all unpleasant states. Eventually, the criterion for an aversive state declines, such that the temporarily rewarding behaviour increases in frequency, resulting in the persistent use of the escape tactics.

A fundamental assumption is that a person will attempt to explain the disparity between his actions and prior expectations via an attributional search. Subsequent heightened self awareness may result in negative affect if self standards are violated or failure is perceived, and escape from aversive states occurs by a shift to lower levels of meaning. Consequent deconstruction is characterised by concrete self awareness, and rigid thinking, guided by proximal goals, with a focus on present sensations and movements.

Hence, self evaluation is avoided, culminating in disinhibition and violation of personal standards. An absence of abstract processing increases the salience of situational factors, rendering consequent behaviour as compulsive, mindless, and habitual. Thus, during deconstruction, the person appears simplistic and irrational, since logical thought relies on higher level processes.

Deconstruction as a state, is difficult to sustain, as moves to higher levels can be caused by various environmental cues. Even during deconstruction, while negative affect is considerably dampened, vague negative feelings, such as unhappiness, may be experienced. Therefore, it is an inadequate means of resolving aversive self awareness and negative self evaluation.

At times, cognitive “reconstruction” of the situation that prompted the initial escape may occur, for example, construing a failure as a test set by God. Alternatively, cognitive levels engaged in will fluctuate, and appetitive behaviours to escape residual negative feelings, will be indulged. The cognitive, affective and behaviour changes associated with cognitive deconstruction can enhance the potential for such self defeating strategies to persist.

Cognitive Deconstruction in Sexual Offenders

Cognitive Deconstruction seeks to address limitations in etiological and relapse theories, which fail to define how offending commences and when relapse occurs. The integrated theory (Marshall et al., 1989, 1990) while incorporating multiple causes, focuses on social learning and inadequate social skills in the development of sexual offending. Pither's (1990) relapse model highlights proximal factors in the relapse cycle, where transitions between phases are made by mediational factors. However, greater specificity of cognitive processes and thoughts is warranted (Ward et al., 1995).

Cognitive deconstruction provides an adjunct to the aforementioned theories, in explaining offending onset, its relapse, and further elucidation of the features of cognitive distortions and affective deficits in general. Fundamental to these theories is the notion of an offender's vulnerability. According to deconstruction, a vulnerable male experiences negative affect when feelings of inadequacy challenge his self image.

Painful self evaluations invoke deconstruction, which suspends self regulation (including a regard for the outcome of the behaviour, concern for others, and ability to maintain a positive self image). A desire for gratification is induced, and together with an opportunity to offend, its occurrence is almost inevitable. These core features of deconstruction serve to facilitate offending, and the concrete focus on sensations and pleasure, allows the man to avoid negatively evaluating his behaviour.

Simultaneously, a preference for proximal goals narrows the focus of time to the present activity, and longer term consequences, including concern for the victim, are ignored. Thinking is simplistic and irrational, and the absence of high level processing means that effective coping strategies will not be used. Cognitive deconstruction results in a lack of empathy, persistent and impulsive behaviour, passivity towards problems, and feelings of hopelessness. These effects then perpetuate or increase offending, which in turn, requires a sustained deconstructed state, manifesting in a vicious cycle. •

Patterns of cognitive deconstruction will vary for different offenders. Specifically, different forms of deconstruction account for the emergence and perpetuation of offending in adolescent and adult onset perpetrators. Adversive or poor developmental experiences, resulting in deficits in social confidence, make the adolescent vulnerable, although it is unclear why it leads to sexual offending. Negative affect due to unresolved stressors and problems is escaped by cognitive deconstruction, and may reflect a generalised coping strategy.

Such a male would constantly be in a state of stress, which, according to Baumeister, is significant to the adoption of cognitive deconstruction. He also may never have attained an abstract style of self regulation enabling evaluation of long term consequences, victim impact, and a comparison with an idealised self image. This poorly developed style of cognitive processing, is likely to be accompanied by a bad and undeserving self image, which would not clash with bad behaviour, even in the event of abstract self regulation.

The absence of self evaluation, a desire for gratification, and the opportunity to offend all interact to facilitate sexual offending, and continued engagement in cognitive deconstruction assists in its perpetuation. However, the imperfect nature of this solution and inadequate coping strategies lead to pressure to cognitively “reconstruct” or reinterpret their situation. And because at this stage in development, compared with older offenders, it is easier for such a male to cognitively reconstruct and develop new beliefs that “solve” the issue of their sexual deviancy, an offence-supportive belief system evolves.

A man who begins offending during adulthood, although reasonably well functioning, tends to have some vulnerable features (e.g., low self esteem), and offends at times of stress. Problems resulting in negative self evaluations lead to a state of cognitive deconstruction. Consequently, abstract levels are abandoned in favour of lower, concrete processes, and allow offending. In this state, the man will begin to gradually shape up his opportunities to offend. The compilation of cognitive deconstruction, desire and opportunity then maximise his potential to offend.

Subsequent to offending, a negative self image must be avoided by engaging in sustained cognitive deconstruction. Engaging in continued deconstruction contributes to ongoing perpetration, and the offender is likely to alienate himself from peer support. However, in contrast with adolescent onset offenders, the belief systems of these men, are relatively entrenched. Therefore, it is unlikely that a system that legitimises their deviancy can be maintained.

Hence, there is an ever present risk of graduating to higher levels of processing, entailing negative self-evaluations, and resulting in negative emotions, such as condemnation. Consequently, these men tend to deny, avoid discussing, and minimise aspects of their offending in an attempt to divert attention and culpability elsewhere.

The offender who commences during adolescence, with a persistent pattern of perpetration, will utilise a style of cognitive deconstruction that extends to a generalised

approach to life. Inability to adequately self regulate will result from gratification seeking, enhancing the potential for various other self destructive excesses (other paraphilia/addictions). Habitual cognitive deconstruction will contribute to a lack of guilt, remorse, and ready admissions of culpability. Masturbation to deviant fantasies are likely, as these men are void of embarrassment, and as such, personify true “pedophiles”.

In comparison, cognitive deconstruction in adult onset offenders will relate only to offending, characterised by a processing style that fluctuates between abstract and concrete levels. Accordingly, they will be “tormented” by guilt, making denials and minimisations more likely than for adolescent onset offenders. The presence of guilt, resulting from abstract processing will inhibit deviant thinking, unless stressors and an opportunity to offend are present. Consequently, they are less likely to be “pedophilic” perpetrators.

Understanding Distortions and Affective Deficits

Cognitive distortions that are associated with a cognitively deconstructed state are distinct from those arising as a consequence of the state. For example, failure to recognise the long term consequences for a victim, is directly related to the absence of higher level processing during an offence. Other distortions, such as blaming a victim, emerge retrospectively, in an attempt to justify and rationalise the abuse, and these require sophisticated and complex operations involving attributions of causality and responsibility.

Deconstruction, during offending, in which concrete features are focussed on may result in greater processing of these features, and their subsequent recall, rendering them more salient. These features include perceiving aspects of the victims behaviour as compliance, while dismissing signs to the contrary. Therefore, when later recalling the incident, this concrete focus biases an offenders assessment of his culpability. Thus these retrospective type distortions emerge from the cognitively deconstructed state.

A deconstructed state, involving a retreat from higher level processing produces irrational and magical thinking that accompany cognitive distortions. Thought is more concrete, guided by proximal concerns, and relatively void of higher level control over actions and leads to a complacent, external locus of control. A focus on concrete goals then precludes long term planning, enabling self serving interpretations. An associated lack of emotion also diminishes any sense of value and meaning while in this state.

A state of deconstruction has implications for covert or unconscious planning of an offence, and apparently results from three mechanisms. First, the absence of higher level planning may induce an inability to recognise a potentially high risk situation. Second, previous reinforcement of situationally controlled behaviour during deconstruction may become established as an entrenched pattern. Third, these phenomena may derive from the concrete focus on short term goals which, in the absence of abstract planning, allows avoidance or unawareness of possible aversive outcomes. Because higher level interpretations are avoided, planning becomes relatively inaccessible to awareness, and is therefore rudimentary in nature.

Similarly, concentrating on short term gratification rather than long term outcome, results from a deconstructed level of processing. This is essential to cognitive deconstruction, since from other viewpoints, this feature has frequently been regarded as a predispositional personality characteristic. According to the theory, the problem of immediate gratification is more likely a derivative of the deconstructed state. Therefore, it reflects a style of processing that focuses on present sensations, rather than an inability to delay gratification, due to a personality deficit.

Distortions concerning victims reactions, complete the vacuum in the wake of simplistic and superficial thinking. Also, disengagement from or absence of higher level processing, precludes consideration of abstract concepts such as victim harm. Consequently, interpreting the victim's experience of the abuse as enjoyable, may be a function of these features. Therefore, a lack of empathy would be expected, although only with respect to the offender's own victim(s), rather than to victims in general.

Summary of the Theory of Cognitive Deconstruction

Cognitive Deconstruction was derived from the available knowledge about dysfunctional cognitions, and explains their emergence and development at an unprecedented level of detail. The theory distinguishes between early and late onset offenders, and accounts for their different cognitions by integrating the effects of developmental experiences prior to adulthood. These result in concrete processing in an early onset offender and more abstract thinking in a late onset offender. Deconstruction into a concrete state occurs for the late onset offender, in order to escape the negative affect caused by the discrepancy between his acts and his morals. This form of conflict resolution is not utilised by the early onset offender, since it requires a more abstract level of cognitive functioning and victim empathy, of which he is void.

(G) GENERAL SUMMARY AND INTRODUCTION TO THE AIMS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

Intervention in child molestation requires a foundation of empirically based information. This information is also required in order to develop comprehensive models that guide both research and treatment initiatives. Empirical examination of cognitive features involved in such offending is in its early stages and much of the literature to date has been disparate and is in need of integration. However, by demonstrating that child molesters often exhibit more dysfunctional cognitions than non-offending men, these studies have underscored the critical role of dysfunctional thinking in the offence cycle.

To understand the emergence of dysfunctional cognitions, the dynamics of each child molester and the relative contributions of salient factors must be examined. Assessment of a man's cognitions must accommodate proximal concerns (e.g., the offence cycle), as well as personal and contextual factors (e.g., lifestyle stresses), to determine their influence on his offending and the related content of his cognitions.

Currently, our understanding of the thought processes associated with dysfunctional cognitions is scant, having received limited attention both theoretically and empirically. Recently however, the cognitive processes used by molesters in the communication of their thoughts have been conceptualised in a model of dysfunctional cognitions (Fon, 1996). This model provides a comprehensive system for analysing offenders' self disclosures at an unprecedented level of depth. The model, by enabling the compilation of detailed knowledge, may assist in clarifying whether certain cognitions emerge as predispositional or consequential to offending behaviour.

While child molesters share many characteristics that distinguish them from other sex offenders, they are not a homogeneous group. Several attempts to develop molester typologies have been made, but at this stage, the preferential/situational dichotomy has received the most validation. Differences in the offending characteristics and etiological factors are used to distinguish each subtype, and preliminary investigations have revealed that these differences are also manifested in their cognitions. Since child sex offenders' dysfunctional cognitions are involved in both the development and perpetuation of their offending, it makes sense to examine these at a detailed level, according to the subtypes.

The current investigation sought to address the paucity in the literature by examining the nature of child molesters' cognitive features. The first objective was to

provide a descriptive profile of the dysfunctional cognitions presented by a group of child molesters, whilst disclosing the details of their own offending. The model of dysfunctional cognitions (Fon, 1996) had been extended for use in the current study, in order to analyse the participants' cognitions. Due to the complexity of the model, specific predictions were not made. The analysis was, therefore, intended as exploratory.

Second, the participants were examined for differences in their cognitions according to the preferential/situational subtypes. Specific hypotheses were derived from the assumptions embodied in the offender typology (Groth, 1978) and the theory of cognitive deconstruction (Ward et al., 1995). The theory distinguishes between late-onset (situational) and early-onset offenders according to differences in their offending patterns, and reflect the men's dissimilar early developmental experiences.

These result in styles of cognitive processing that are concrete in preferential men and are more abstract in situational men who 'deconstruct' into states of concrete thinking during their offending. Cognitive deconstruction loosely underpins the study, which in addition to examining specific factors, compares the two offender subtypes for differences in the levels of their general cognitive processing (concrete/abstract).

Due to their concrete style of thought processing and acceptance of sexual interactions with children, the preferential participants were expected to describe their offences and offending behaviours more than the situational men. Also, because this offending is both habitual and central to the lifestyles of preferential men, it was expected that they would report greater use of planning in their offences than the situational men.

Situational men, however, were expected to engage in more instances of negative evaluations which, according to cognitive deconstruction (Ward et al., 1995) are invoked by higher levels of processing, characteristic of this offender subtype. Similarly, it was anticipated that situational men would use more instances of self-related content than the preferential men, and their themes would be negative in nature (e.g., own affect state).

Finally, it was predicted that the situational type offenders would engage in more instances of denials and minimisations than the preferential participants. Confirmation of this difference can be explained by cognitive deconstruction, whereby situational men attempt to deflect responsibility for their offences through a form of 'reconstruction', involving higher levels of thought process, inaccessible to preferential men. Engaging in denials and minimisations which result from this process, serves to dissipate the negative feelings resulting from the conflict between morals and deviant behaviour. The study concludes with a discussion of the results, and recommendations for future research.

(III) THE PRESENT STUDY

(A) METHOD

Participants

Twenty-five incarcerated male child sex offenders attending the Kia Marama Sex Offender Treatment Programme, finally participated in the present study. All potential subjects were individually invited to participate, during introductory interviews with the author. Recruitment of participants occurred at the conclusion of the initial assessment interviews conducted by their therapists, and prior to the commencement of therapy.

The rationale for enlisting at this particular time was due to the expectation that they would be the most willing to provide a descriptive narrative of their most recent or typical offending experience, but would still do so in a distorted manner. Prior to this stage, the men were relatively unused to discussing their offending. However, after this point they would be systematically challenged with respect to their distorted beliefs and attitudes, as part of the ensuing treatment process.

Introduction to The Procedures Followed

The present undertaking comprised several procedures, and each are introduced below; **Stage (1) Data Collection**, involved the recruitment and interviewing of the 25 participants, the acquisition of demographic information about offenders and their victims, official offence details, and the diagnoses of offender subtypes (preferential and situational).

In **Stage (2) Coding of Interview Transcripts for Analysis**, all 25 interview transcripts were dissected into meaning units for analysis. *The Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions* (Fon, 1996) was extended by devising a categorisation system for coding the units according to cognitive processing and content features. Inter-rater reliability in the coding of a selection of transcripts was established, followed by the coding of the remaining transcripts.

In **Stage (3) Meta-variable Assessment**, the participants' original transcripts were rated according to the four meta-variable measures, outlined in the model. These are intended to represent an offender's style of communication at a general level.

In **Stage (4) Denials and Minimisations**, a checklist, based on the *Denials and Minimisations Checklist* (Barbaree & Cortoni, 1993) was used to assess discrepancies between offender accounts and summary information, and was concerned with cognitive distortions of factual elements.

(1) Data Collection

Recruitment of Participants:

The recruitment phase (introductory interview) was conducted on an individual basis, during which time all potential subjects were invited to participate, after having the general purpose of the study explained to them, and their tasks within it. Participants were introduced to the concept of sexual offending as a process involving a sequence of steps, incorporating aspects of behaviours, thoughts and feelings. They were then informed of the aims of the study, insofar as the importance of describing their thoughts and feelings that emerged during these stages. These were probed throughout the subsequent interview phase, in which the participants were asked to disclose details of their offending.

All consensual participants were provided with appropriate assurances of anonymity, confidentiality and the right to withdraw consent to participation at any time, and were provided with an *Information Sheet/Consent Form* (see Appendix II), which reiterated these issues. Each man was then issued with a version of the semi-structured interview, entitled *Description of Your Experience* (see Appendix III). Devised specifically for the current study, the questionnaire was intended as a guide, requesting the respondent to construct an account of his most recent or typical offence, in as much detail as possible. The contents of the questionnaire were discussed with each participant, in order to assist him with full comprehension of the requirements, and to address any queries that arose prior to completion.

The Interview Phase:

The completion of the questionnaire was designed to be flexible in that participants were allowed the option of responding in either written form, or via dictaphone as a take-home assignment or, as an alternative, within the context of a face-to-face interview. For those offenders who preferred to respond in writing, a two to three day period was designated for completion, to ensure that sufficient time was allocated to the assignment. Participants who responded in writing were later met by the

author, and thanked for their participation. Where a respondent's written narrative required further exploration of detail, interactive interviews were conducted by the author, and recorded on audio-tape.

Respondents who requested an interview were interviewed individually, with the sessions being recorded on audio-tape. During these sessions, the semi-structured questionnaire provided a guide for discussion, in order to obtain the information sought. However, some men experienced distress as a result of the task, thus sessions were tailored to suit, and brief intervals were permitted wherever necessary. All participants were then debriefed and thanked for their contributions at the conclusion of the interviews.

The Interview - "Description of Your Experience"

The questionnaire utilised in the present undertaking was created with the intention of eliciting not only dysfunctional cognitions, but detailed information encompassing features of affect and behaviour. Therefore, questionnaire items probed for cognitions that were enlisted during the offence, as well as within the broader context surrounding the offence.

The interview schedule was arranged in five sections, in order to obtain sufficient information regarding each man's attitudes, feelings and behaviours prior to the commission of the offence, during its enactment, and subsequent to its occurrence. The first four sections in the interview reflect the chronological stages posited in the Relapse Prevention model (Pithers, 1990), frequently used in clinical practice as a means of assisting perpetrators in understanding their own offending patterns.

Each segment in the questionnaire required the respondent to recall what occurred at a particular stage in the offence process. Included were a series of questions, accompanied by examples in order to probe for detail regarding cognitions. In all sections, the respondent was asked to describe not only what occurred, but his own thoughts, feelings and responses as well. Essentially, the questionnaire, in requesting a description of the offender's experiences in such detail was designed to access dysfunctional cognitions by invoking aspects of his own subjective states that emerged during the offence process.

Section (1) concerned *Background Factors*, and requested that the offender described features of his life prior to the offence, and therefore, probed contextual (situational and personal) aspects or factors that may have triggered the offence. He was

asked to describe his affective and behavioural responses, and his cognitive appraisal of these factors, particularly those concerning interpersonal, work and social relationships.

Section (2) related to a *High Risk Situation*, at this point, the offender finds himself in a position where his sense of control over overt sexual behaviour is threatened. The respondent was asked to describe what occurred on the day of the offence, and the questionnaire items largely dealt with the man's own behavioural responses and subjective states (e.g., desiring sexual contact, mood, intoxication). According to the theory, an HRS is associated with an increased potential to offend, consequently, this section probed the offender's affective state and cognitions, including any intention or plans to offend.

Section (3) assessed factors relevant to the *Lapse* phase, whereby the behaviour preceding the enacted offence reflected an intention to do so. The questions related to the person's subjective state (e.g., sexual arousal and ideation), in order to determine the presence of intent. Emphasis was also placed on the nature of his acquaintance with the victim (e.g., he approached a child in a park), to include the manner in which the victim was solicited.

Section (4) reflected the *Relapse* stage, and concerned the actual offence, this involved a description of the sexual contact (including both the offender's and the child's participation). The man was asked to describe his experience (e.g., pleasure, a sense of control), the child's behavioural response, and the perceived experience of the child (e.g., enjoyment).

Section (5) dealt with the individual's perception of his *Victim* (e.g., his opinion of the child), his ability to empathise with the effect of the encounter on the victim (e.g., harm or benefit), and the perceived responsibility of the child (e.g., willingness).

Transcription of Interviews and Participant Reference Allocation:

All interview material (written scripts and audiotapes), were transcribed for the purpose of analysis, by the author. Each man's transcript was assigned to a code number for referencing, and as a safety precaution, to maintain confidentiality. Interview transcripts formed the basis for the data analysis stage.

Application of Diagnostic Criteria and Offender Typology:

Each participant was classified as either a *preferential* (fixated), or *situational* (regressed) style of child molester, according to the criteria identified by Groth (Groth, Hobson and Gary, 1982) (see Appendix IV). These evaluations were conducted independently of the current study by each participant's respective therapist, who had been provided with a copy of the diagnostic criteria. During both the data collection and analysis phases, the author was blind to the diagnostic assessment of each person. These were revealed on completion of coding, in order to prevent any influence of bias due to preexisting expectations.

Obtaining Demographic and Offence Details for Offenders and their Victims:

Information pertaining to offenders' demographic details and previous offending histories was accrued via each man's clinical files in order to compile a descriptive offending profile of the sample of child molesters under study. Relevant demographic details of each man's victim were also recorded.

Official documentation concerning each participant's particular offence (e.g., Summary of Facts, Presentence Report, Judge's Sentencing Notes etc) that were contained within the clinical files were also perused. Offence details were required for the identification of minimisations and denials presented by the participants during disclosure of their offendings.

Discrepancies between the 'actual' facts relating to the offence and the offender's version were later assessed and recorded on checklist, derived from Barbaree and Cortoni (1993; see Appendix V). This summary information was gathered at the conclusion of the coding phase, to prevent the possible influence of bias resulting from preexisting expectations on the part of the researcher.

(2) Coding of Interview Transcripts For Analysis

A complex sequence of procedures was involved in the coding of interview transcripts, and while they are detailed below in chronological order, a brief overview is required. Firstly, each of the 25 interview transcripts were segmented into their respective "meaning units". That is discrete cognitive entities, as defined by Fon (1996).

Next, the model's (Fon, 1996) protocols were applied to a selection of transcripts, in a preliminary exercise, designed to examine its utility. The model was then extended through the development of a subclassification system, enabling a more detailed analysis of its operations and contents features contained in meaning units. A numerical schedule for coding the analysed meaning units was simultaneously developed, and used to code the meaning units contained in all 25 transcripts

Preparing Transcripts For Coding-Identifying Meaning Units:

Each of the 25 transcripts was broken down into individual meaning units. Each transcript was read several times, in order to obtain a sense of the general tone used, and the level of detail expressed by the offender. Familiarisation with the material was essential to the process of identifying both relevant meaning units and extraneous information that did not constitute a meaning unit. Meaning units were defined as references to offending, including the man's behaviour, thoughts and feelings, as well as those of his victim, and lifestyle features and events.

Discrete meaning units were extracted from the responses or statements provided by the offenders within the context of their interviews, and reflected self contained concepts for individual coding. Meaning units were usually comprised of sentences, or components of sentences that had been divided into separate segments, according to the central theme discussed by the participant.

Presented below is an example of a passage extracted from a monologue. Each meaning unit, encircled by parentheses, represents a concept/theme that was deemed distinct from those that preceded and followed it. The passage contains six individual meaning units, formed by both sentences and segmented sentences, illustrating the level of depth sought in preparation for the subsequent coding stage.

(When I molested my victim, it would have been in the early afternoon).

(At that time I was unemployed) and (living with the child's mother, in a defacto situation).

(I was not happy in the relationship) then, (as she was seldom home) and (she seemed pretty much disinterested in me or our relationship)...

(It was sometime in the afternoon) and (I began to think about what I had done to her)...

The breakdown of transcript material into codable meaning units, required a system of standardisation in order to compensate for the variability presented by the range in lengths of the transcripts. Information such as distant childhood experiences that did not comprise background factors in the model's first phase, the offence chain, were omitted.

Statements that were used repeatedly by an offender would be identified as a codable meaning unit once only, providing they emerged within the same context in the narrative, or phase in the offence chain. Finally, information deemed extraneous to the interview or to the offence process was omitted, including current activities and conversation with the researcher. Standardisation of the interview transcripts for the identification of meaning units was essential to accurate analysis during the subsequent coding phase.

Extending the Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions for Application to Transcripts:

The original version of the *Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions* (Fon, 1996) formed the basis of analysing the information contained in meaning units, according to features of the Operation and Content categories. However, because the participants recounted their offendings at a very detailed level of disclosure, a corresponding form of analysis was required to capture and code the thematic aspects of their cognitions. Therefore, in order to analyse the units in this way, the conceptual model was expanded upon through a gradual process involving the examination of a sample of transcripts.

The (Extended) Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions:

Represented overleaf, is the version of the model that was utilised in the current undertaking, incorporating the aforementioned modifications. Presented are the features used to code meaning units; (A) *Operations* and (B) *Contents*. These are accompanied by their definitions, and by illustrations cited from transcripts in the study. The final assessment feature in the model (C) *Meta-variable* ratings, is presented later, in adherence to the chronological procedure followed in the present methodology.

A MODEL OF DYSFUNCTIONAL COGNITIONS

(A) COGNITIVE OPERATIONS

Cognitive Operations are the methods or processes by which information content is relayed. That is 'how' the offender presents information regarding his offending, offences and victims. The seven categories of cognitive operations are as follows:

Categories of Cognitive Operations

(1) Describing:

Describing refers to providing an illustration or account of persons, thoughts, events, or situations by way of details and facts (e.g, what happened, when, where, what the consequences were), examples:

'they used to come to play with our kids'

'and then I violated her with my finger'

'No family, living on my own'

(2) Explaining:

Attributing causes or reasons for events or behaviours, providing a retrospective account of 'why' he or others acted, felt or perceived a situation or event in a particular way.

Included are attributions for his own behaviour:

'This was a trap for me because there were no visible signs'.

or the victim's behaviour:

'she wanted to come for a ride, so she just sat on the back'

or a situation:

'for some reason, the car wouldn't start'

(3) Interpreting:

Attaching a meaning or intention to a behaviour (typically the victim's) or situation, concurrent with, or immediately subsequent to, the event occurring. During the HRS and lapse stages of the offence chain, the offender's interpretation or misinterpretation of the actions of his victim influences whether he will proceed through the chain to relapse.

A victim's behaviour may be interpreted as seductive or inviting sexual contact to occur:

'she didn't say no, so I guess she wanted it'

(4) Evaluating:

Is rated as either **Negative (-4)**, or **Positive (+4)**

Appraisal/judgement of his own or others behaviours, perceived intention or thought with affect. Occurs most frequently in lapse and post relapse stages, and reflects the degree of responsibility felt by the offender. How he evaluates his actions or thoughts

during the lapse influences his progression into relapse. Post-relapse evaluation concerns attempts to terminate offending, if just momentarily or continues.

Subsequent to lapse or relapse, guilt/shame may be experienced, and he may evaluate himself negatively:

'I was being the animal, I was abusing him'.

He may even evaluate himself positively:

'I'd feel as though I had entered my empire, I had all three of them at the same time, I felt like I had really peaked''

To avoid negative self evaluation, others may be blamed:

'the wife had a bad habit of putting the girl into bed with us'.

(5) Denying:

Relates to the wrongfulness of the act, and involves deliberate omission or misrepresentation of information. He may deny the occurrence or the sexual nature/intent of his behaviour:

'I didn't do that like she said',

he may experience apparent difficulty in recall:

'its all a bit hazy now',

A failure or unwillingness to disclose requested information in response to interviewer probing, also constitutes denial.

(6) Minimising:

Misrepresentation of information by partial omission of relevant details, or downgrading aspects of the act. Included are the frequency, duration, extent of intrusiveness, and severity:

'I only went as far as masturbation'

'The only time she told me not to do it was when...'

(7) Planning:

Involves covert or implicit planning, occurring at different stages of the offence chain (ie proximal or distal planning), and can differ in the degrees of planning employed,

'and I guess the mind started working overtime .. you know, here's the best chance you are ever going to get, there's nobody here there's an excuse because she needs a bath'.

'I had planned to educate her about sex, I wanted to prepare her for full intercourse when she was older..'

(B) COGNITIVE CONTENT

Cognitive Content has been divided into three separate areas of which the offender may focus, including himself, his victim, or situational features.

(1) SELF: Cognitions relating to the self can be either Internal or External in emphasis

Internal: (1.1) **Personality:** enduring traits, including attitudes, beliefs, roles, the need for power and control.

'I've never been spiteful or aggressive'.

(1.2) **Psychological States:** any current state experienced by offender

(a) sexual arousal

(b) sexual thoughts or fantasies

(c) negative affect

(d) positive affect (includes control)

(e) intoxication

(1.3) **Behaviour:** either relating to offending or general behaviour,

(a) general behaviour

(b) offending behaviour (includes threats, bribery, plans).

(c) previous sexual offending

(d) nonoffending behaviour with victim

(1.4) **Sexual Attitudes and History:** any attitudes or beliefs regarding sexual activity or sexuality and prior and current sexual experiences.

'But sex with my brother was a wonderful thing'

(a) positive attitude/experiences

(b) neutral attitude/experiences

(c) negative attitude/experiences

(1.5) **Nontransient Psychological Conditions:** distinct from current states, these are longer ranging, including clinical type conditions.

'I'd be drinking all the time, to ease the pain, you know'

'I was recovering from a shooting, still am'

(a) addictions/substance abuse

(b) physical conditions/illnesses

(c) clinical disorder, e.g, depression.

External: (1.6) **Significant Relationships:** current/history, incorporates aspects of relationship with significant other/spouse, including sexual.

'Sex between me and the wife stopped after the last baby'

(a) positive

(b) neutral

(c) negative

- (1.7) **Family:** current/history, homelife also. May involve references to collusion in offending, denial on familial level.
'my parents were also living with us at the time'
- (1.8) **Other:** includes, work, social, friends, other relationships.
'got on well with my workmates, we'd go to the local at knockoff time'
- (1.9) **Lifestyle Factors/Circumstances:** features of life/background that often result in affect (e.g., stress, anger), traumatic events, problems, employment, finances etc.
'I was stressed out with money/health worries'
- (a) positive
 - (b) neutral
 - (c) negative

(2) **VICTIM:** Cognitions relating to the victim generally centre on the perception of the victim by the offender, but can be expressed in many different forms.

- (2.1) **Behaviour:** verbal and nonverbal behaviour of the victim,
'So he was basically leading me on...just by the way he was putting things, body talk'
'She grabbed me, by the neck, and pulled me onto the bed'
- (a) positive: initiation, participation, consent etc.
 - (b) neutral: indifference, passive
 - (c) negative: active resistance, rejection
 - (d) nonsexual behaviour
- (2.2) **Personality:** enduring traits, e.g., playful, lonely, needing attention,
'He was a very affectionate child'
- (a) positive
 - (b) negative
- (2.3) **Response to Abuse:** within the context of the encounter
Including degree of enjoyment, acceptance of abuse,
'He didn't seem to object at all',
'Negative, no reaction'
- (a) positive: enjoyment
 - (b) neutral: acceptance/indifference
 - (c) negative
- (2.4) **Attitude to Offender:** way in which the victim is perceived to like, trust or respond to offender,
'She didn't like me...I was fat and forty'
- (a) positive
 - (b) neutral
 - (c) negative

- (2.5) **Relationship with Offender:** perception of the relationship by the offender may be viewed as father and son, lovers, pseudoadult
'He just wanted somebody to be there and have somebody to be with him and look after him'.
'I thought we could grow up together, and live together when she was older'
 (a) lovers: romantic, pseudo adult, mutual
 (b) parental: guidance, educator
 (c) casual: sexual gratification
- (2.6) **Effects/Impact of Abuse:** awareness/lack of impact on victim
'No, I think it wouldn't bother her at all'. Perceived effects:
'I have damaged her psychologically, and I have to live with that'
 (a) positive
 (b) neutral
 (c) negative
- (2.7) **Psychological States:** any current state experienced by the victim, such as degree of sexual arousal or affective state,
'If he happened to be a bit down/depressed, if things weren't going right for him, he'd turn up'.
'It was pretty obvious that he was aroused by what I was doing'
 (a) positive affect
 (b) negative affect
 (c) sexual arousal
- (2.8) **Family Relationships:** current/history,
'His parents didn't have much interest in him'.
- (2.9) **Sexual Attitudes and History:** includes prior victimisation by other offenders, and (perceived/actual) sexual experience
'..when he told me about his sexual relationships with other boys'.
'She had done this before, and got right into it'
 (a) positive attitude/experiences
 (b) neutral attitude/experiences
 (c) negative attitude/experiences
- (2.10) **Physical Characteristics:** includes features such as age, height, appearance etc.
'she was tall for her age, and had really beautiful eyes'
- (3) **SITUATION:** Cognitions relating to the circumstances and context and usually involve behaviour of others, the setting, location, time, previous activities. Usually without direct reference to the offence or behaviour of offender or victim
'the day I molested my victim, we were sitting in the lounge'
'It would have been in the morning'

Procedures and Details of Modifications to The Model:

Modifications to the model primarily involved the development of a classification system, by providing subcategories for the majority of its Contents features. These were identified as a means of incorporating features of affect to be used during coding.

Firstly, a selection of transcripts, previously sorted into meaning units, were analysed according to the features of operation and content, contained in the original model (Fon, 1996).

This analysis was conducted by the researcher and research collaborator, who together identified and discussed the most salient or recurrent themes embodied within the meaning units examined. Through a process of constant refinement, themes or topics were grouped together according to their similarity in content meaning and were identified and collapsed under the appropriate Content category.

While no changes were made to the original nine content categories, an additional feature was included. The additional category, denoted by the code **2.10**, represented a Victim related content class, described as Physical Characteristics of the Victim. This was included in order to accommodate the physical characteristics of victims that had been frequently observed in the selection of transcripts analysed. For example, several offenders had referred to the colour of their victims' eyes, height, attractiveness, and the way they were attired.

For some of the content features, subcategories were specified, given that the model is concerned with examining cognitive factors relevant to offending. For example, subcategories were specified under the content feature **1.3**, representing the offender's own behaviour. In order to examine transcripts at the desired level of detail, it was necessary to provide subcategories that distinguished offending behaviour and other types of behaviours.

Therefore, four types of behaviour were identified as (a) general behaviour, such as driving to work, (b) offending behaviour, including both sexual activities with the victim and related behaviours such as plans, threats, and solicitation. Subcategory (c) previous sexual offending was included to code any references made to an offender's prior sexual offending and previous victims, finally (d) non-offending behaviour with the victim denoted non-sexual activities with the victim, for example, horseriding, reading and talking.

However, it was recognised that the range of topics discussed by offenders is potentially infinite, and the sample of transcripts employed in developing the system was

by contrast, limited. Therefore, subcategories of content factors needed to be specific enough to capture the essence of a meaning unit at an acceptable level of analysis, while simultaneously ensuring the codability of less common or idiosyncratic concepts presented by an individual offender.

This was resolved by developing subcategories according to features of affect (positive, negative and neutral), thereby enabling appropriate categorisation without constraining the data. For example, the category **1.6**, denoting references to the offender's current or prior significant other, was subcategorised as (a) positive, (b) neutral, and (c) negative.

As with the content features, no changes were made to the seven categories of operations. However, the fourth operation in the model, Evaluation, was dimensionalised, as either Negative (-4) or Positive (+4). Since Evaluation is defined as involving judgement, it was deemed necessary to include the dimension of affect for the purpose of meaningful analysis. For example, the statement '*I was being the animal*' was coded as **-4/1.3b**. Here the offender is clearly judging his offending behaviour in a negative way, and by doing so, he appears to accept responsibility for his actions during post-relapse evaluation.

Although evaluations concerned affect and therefore, were necessarily either negative or positive, they were not restricted to only references to offending behaviour. For example, the statement '*our family life was really good, we had no problems there*' represents the positive appraisal of a man's homelife, and was denoted by the code **+4/1.7**

Establishing Inter-rater Reliability:

The final version of the extended model was used to assess inter-rater reliability, to validate the clarity of the coding system in its application, and to ensure consistency on the part of the researcher. Seven of the twenty-five transcripts, selected at random, were independently coded by the author and the research collaborator. The numerical code representing the Operation/Content combination for each meaning unit of each transcript were then compared for concurrence. Meaning units that did not receive concordant codes were discussed by the raters and were resolved through negotiation until consensus was reached. In all cases, resolution occurred, with the number of initial discrepancies being small. Assessment of inter-rater reliability yielded a score of 96% agreement between the coders, and was judged to be acceptable.

Application of the Model in Coding Interview Transcripts:

Analysis of the remaining transcripts involved coding each previously identified meaning unit according to the features of operation and content. For each meaning unit, the code was comprised of a numerical combination denoting the type of operation used, the content element, and its associated subcategory. In coding meaning units, the operation type is recorded first, and the content classification second. The following example, provided earlier, illustrates the application of the system in the analysis.

(When I molested my victim, it would have been in the early afternoon.)

This meaning unit is characterised by the numerical combination 1/3, Operation/Content), denoting a Description, and focuses on aspects of the Situation. Essentially, the statement involves the imparting of information, and does not convey resulting affect or elaboration, and is therefore a descriptive process. Although the offender does refer to his offence, the emphasis is placed on contextual features surrounding the offence, (the time of day) Situation under Content.

(she seemed pretty much disinterested in me or our relationship)...

The second meaning unit is characterised as -4/1.6c. In this instance, the man is conveying a feeling of unhappiness associated with the lack of interested he perceived in his significant other. Therefore, the operation is used is a negative evaluation. The theme or contents concerns his relationship with her, which was coded as related to the Self, in the category of significant relationships, and involved a negative behaviour or attitude on the part of his partner.

(I guess that feeling neglected by her made me look elsewhere for gratification)

This meaning unit is represented by the code 2/1.3b, and represents the offender's attempt to identify the cause of his offending behaviour, denoted by the operation of Explanation. The content focus of this process is molesting behaviour, specified in the model under Self and Behaviour.

(3) Meta-variable Assessment

Rating Offender Transcripts For Meta-variable Analysis:

Meta-variable analyses of transcripts were conducted at the conclusion of coding, as by this stage, the author was well acquainted with their contents, which enhanced the accuracy of their assessment. Each transcript was rated according to four independent meta-variables: (1) *Detail*, (2) *Passivity*, (3) *Euphemisms*, (4) *Concreteness*. These reflect some general stylistic features involved in communication, and their measurement (rating) is made according to the extent to which they are featured in an interview.

The meta-variable component of the model was modified only slightly, by utilising a five-point rating scale, adapted from the seven-point scale suggested in the original version (Fon, 1996). The four meta-variables are presented and defined below, supplemented by illustrations of their application, abstracted from offender accounts in the study. The rating scales used to measure each variable are included also, these served to define the reference points located for measurement at each polar end as well as their midpoints. The model is followed by a description of the procedures enlisted in the analysis.

However, it should be noted that the measurement and judgement according to this feature of the model, is necessarily one of self-definition. Clearly delineated parameters for grading interviews on the scale items have not been included. This is due to the nature of the rating scale, which relies upon the grading of a subjects disclosure, in relation to the other participants involved in the particular study.

A MODEL OF DYSFUNCTIONAL COGNITIONS

(C) META-VARIABLES

Four **meta-variables**, *Detail*, *Passivity*, *Euphemisms*, and *Concreteness*, define the general style in which the offender discloses information about his offending. Each meta-variable represents a different aspect or dimension of language use on which the offender's account is rated. Sometimes, the style of presentation may change over the course of the interview or self report, and several ratings of each meta-variable may be made during the classification of an interview. The presence of each independent meta-variable within a transcript is measured on a five-point likert scale, illustrated below.

Meta-Variable Rating Schedule

Meta-Variable	1	2	3	4	5
Detail	Much		Moderate		Little use
Euphemisms	Frequent		Infrequent		Not used
Concreteness	Concrete		Moderate		Abstract
Passivity	Frequent		Infrequent		Not used

Categories of Meta-variables:

The four meta-variables are defined below, and are accompanied by examples, drawn from interviews with participants involved in the present study.

(1) Detail:

Detail refers to the degree of detailed information provided by the offender when describing his offending

Very detailed accounts (1), require very little or no prompting by the interviewer, and are full of detail, often containing more than is requested. Elaborate descriptions of offences is characteristic of these transcripts, for example;

- S Oh yes, it would happen about three times a day, and at the same time I would be going with the mother.*
- I Where would this happen?*
- S Yes, in the home. It didn't matter whether the mother was there in the home or not. I had ways of having sex right in front of their eyes, and she wouldn't know it was happening. After a while the mother and father started having arguments, and one stayed in the lounge. I was invited to stay the night, and this would be going on, and at the same time I would be having it off with the mother. And during the night I would say to (victim) to call my name at a certain time. I'd set the clock for an hour later, and at the time I would be in the bed having sexual intercourse with the mother.*

Information provided in **moderately detailed** accounts (3) covers what is requested only, with no or very little elaboration. Interviewer prompting may be required in part to clarify issues but not to extract the necessary information.

- I and how old was the boy at the time?*
- S He was about ten or eleven at the time when she first brought him over*
- I So, at the time of the incident, the child was in your presence, was he staying with you then?*
- S Yeah, she invited us for a meal that night, when she first brought him over*
- I How long did the child stay with you?*
- S The weekends, he stayed that weekend*
- I did he stay with you permanently after that?*
- S yes, he moved in about two or three weeks later*

Transcripts containing relatively **little detail (5)**, reflecting an offender's reluctance to disclose information, are characterised by brief answers (eg monosyllabic). Failure to provide requested information, a failure to elaborate on specific points, events or offences and obtaining the information often requires frequent interviewer prompting. Also, the offender may avoid direct questions by focussing on other issues, such as legal features of his situation. The following extract from a transcript illustrates an offender's reluctance to answer the interviewer's questions directly, and represents a nondetailed account:

- I and then what did you do?*
- S just went to bed*
- I and what did you do, and what did the boy do?*
- S just had sex*
- I anal penetration?*
- S yeah, no, it wasn't. But I got charged for that.*
- I so what sort of sex did you have?*
- S indecent assault type of thing.*

(2) Passivity:

Language reflecting or implying a passive role in engagement in sexual offending defines this category. Descriptions of offending or offences containing the use of passive language include references to events or situations as something that '*just happened*'.

Interviews containing a **great deal of passive language** are rated as **(1)**. Typically such accounts reflect the offender's belief in an external locus of control over his actions.

Examples of passive language include:

'it only started accidentally, it just got out of control',

*'I was tickling and teasing her as usual, then it all went terribly wrong',
 'it was something that just developed from the other, I suppose',
 'no, it just sort of happened'.*

Accounts containing **no use of passive language (5)** are identified more by the lack of presence rather than the presence of any different form of language use.

(3) Euphemisms:

The use of euphemistic language is identified by the use of vague, incorrect or immature language or slang, substituted for correct terminology or as to disguise the nature of what is being expressed or implied.

Common examples of euphemisms include references to the nature or intention of actions:

*'I was just playing kids' games, teasing',
 'and then I really gave it to her',
 'I put it between his legs and did it to him'.*

Other forms include descriptions of the victim's or the offender's genitals:

*'I started to rub her pussy',
 'and then I rubbed her down there, and didn't stop straight away',
 'then I had my dick in my hand'.*

Offender accounts are rated as reflecting a **frequent use (1)**, an **infrequent use (3)**, or **no use (5)**, of euphemistic language.

(4) Concreteness:

The level or depth of cognitive processing an offender engages in may be viewed as falling on a continuum from **concrete (1)** to **abstract (5)**. This category refers to not only what information was attended to and how this was processed, but also how the events of the offence were subsequently re-evaluated.

Where an offender's processing style is primarily **concrete**, references to offences concern elements of behaviours, feelings and sensations. The following extract illustrates concrete processing;

'I mean, when I was asking her to take her top off, my tongue was hanging out. All I could think of was what was underneath those clothes. So I'm thinking, just take your top off, and I'm tickling her ear and saying 'let's be silly', just putting a bit of humour across. So I'm tickling her, trying to take some of her concentration away, and off would come her top. So I'm tickling her and playing with her, and thinking 'yummy, yummy'.

Abstract processing is characterised by an awareness or insight into the consequences, morality, and dynamic impact of sexual abuse on the victim, offender and wider community. For example:

'The last time I molested my victim, I guess my thoughts and reasons were the same as the first, second and third times. It wasn't that I drank or couldn't handle arguments. But I believe it was because I chose to do it, and because of my "distorted" beliefs with regards to women and sex (fantasies) and that I was unable to reason properly when I first thought about my victim in a sexual way

.....

Analysis of Meta-variables:

Meta-variable analyses were applied to each of the 25 offender transcripts. In order to assess the general communication features embodied in each variable, the original interviews were utilised rather than those that had been extracted into meaning units. The measurement of Detail, Passivity, Euphemisms, and Concreteness, involved a systematic procedure of comparing offenders' disclosures across the group, and examining them at an individual level. The resultant scores, accorded to an individual offender reflect the degree to which he engages in these modes of communication, comparative to the other participants.

The nature of the rating scale dictated that judgements made on any of its five points, necessitated a process of establishing reference points for both extreme poles of the scale. Therefore, each offender's interview was considered in terms of how he responded to the key questions asked, and then compared with those of the other participants.

This examination resulted in defining each independent meta-variable by identifying representative transcripts for the upper (1) and lower (5) ends of the scale. These points of reference served as bases from which the remaining transcripts were rated according to the five measurement points.

While this initial procedure was applied to all the meta-variables, ratings of offenders use of Euphemistic language required more detailed examination, and were judged within the context of an offender's disclosure. Ratings were made according to the frequency with which he used immature language or slang in place correct or more appropriate terminology. His transcript was then compared with those of the other men, functioning as a form of standardisation to check for accuracy in the rating accorded to the individual disclosure.

Thus for each of the 25 offenders, his original interview, during which he disclosed details of his offending, was measured for the degree to which the four meta-variables were used. Each of these were defined separately, since they constitute independent factors used by the offenders in expressing their offence details, and reflect how an offender communicates at a level of relativity to others, and within the context of his own disclosure.

(4) The Assessment of Denials and Minimisations

It was hypothesised that Situational type offenders would engage in more denials and minimisations of factual elements concerning their offences than Preferential offenders. Assessment of these distortions were conducted by comparing the offender's version of his offence with the offence details outlined in judicial documentation. A checklist, derived from the *Denial and Minimisation Checklist* (Barbaree & Cortoni, 1993) was used to record and classify the nature of any such discrepancies presented. This analysis was conducted independently of assessing the offenders' cognitive dysfunctions according to the model.

The model's features of denial and minimisation, measured how an offender expressed his offending behaviour and its effects on his victim, constituting a form of cognitive processing or communication. The recording and subsequent analyses of these expressions (operations) involved the frequency with which they appeared in each man's disclosure. The checklist was used to determine whether or not an individual offender engaged in these features, rather than their frequency of appearance during disclosure.

In identifying features of minimisations and denials, the main criterion was to identify discrepancies between statements made by offenders during the course and contexts of their interviews and the facts contained in official information. Therefore, where an official document indicated that a particular man conceded to his victim's allegations, his admission was subsumed by his own portrayal of events, if it did not equate with the official facts.

The denials and minimisations checklist (See Appendix IV for an outline) was used to record whether each type was present or absent in an individual offender's account, and recorded against the appropriate category. The checklist used in the study

measured the presence of three forms of denial, and several types of minimisations. These are presented below, accompanied by their criteria utilised in the current study.

CRITERIA FOR CHECKING FEATURES OF DENIAL AND MINIMISATION

Denials:

Three main forms of denial of the facts may be presented, but only one form of denial may be checked for an individual, and include:

- (i) of Any Interaction: used only if an offender claims to have had no contact with the child whatsoever, and may accuse the victim or others of being vindictive.
- (ii) that the Interaction was Sexual: if an offender admits to contact with the victim, but disputes that it was sexual (e.g., by claiming that the contact was misconstrued by the victim as sexual, and that it occurred within the context of play, or that he was comforting the child for some reason).
- (iii) that the Interaction was an Offence: if an offender admits to his indecencies but argues that they did not constitute an offence because the victim consented to sexual relations, actively participated, benefited from the experience, or invited it.

Minimisations:

Three main forms of minimisations may be used by an offender, in an attempt to absolve himself of blame. Any number of these may be indulged in by a single offender, and are:

- (i) Responsibility: includes blaming the victim, external attributions and irresponsible internal attributions.

victim blame: a man may claim that he was forced into the encounter, or was seduced by the victim, or tricked into believing he/she was of consensual status.

external attributions: a man may attempt to explain his offence by pointing to factors such as alcohol intoxication, a negative affect state due to external stressors (spousal conflict, work-related problems), or situational factors (being alone with the child).

irresponsible internal attributions: include personal problems, for example, through proclamations of overactive hormones, insatiable and uncontrollable sexual drive, previous sexual victimisation, and a sense of bodily detachment during offending.

(ii) of Extent of the Abuse: includes the frequency of sexual contact with the victim, the use of force, and the extent of intrusiveness inflicted upon the child.

frequency: refers to misrepresentation of the frequency with which the offender violated the child referred to in his disclosure, rather than his previous victims.

force used: refers to overt coercion of the victim, and includes active or threatened physical force, verbal threats (to the safety of the victim or others if he/she did not comply), bribes or forms of compensation offered by the man (e.g., money, gifts).

(iii) of Victim Harm:

long term effects: minimising the effects on the victim include an inability to recognise potential repercussions for the child, reflecting a deficit in empathic ability. This is especially so, if the offender has referred to observed changes in the child (e.g., behaviour, disposition), and has not associated them with the abuse. Included is an offender who is apparently unable to judge these effects for himself, claiming that he is unable to do so because he hasn't seen the child in some time, or will need to refer to what was contained in the victim's statements.

Assessment of the above features as they related to the official facts were made for each individual offender, and were rated categorically, according to whether or not they were presented by the individual participant.

Summary of Methodology and Aims

The data accrued were subject to analyses, in order to explore how the sample of child molesters engaged in dysfunctional cognitions, and to determine whether differences were presented between preferential and situational participants. The results are presented in the subsequent section, followed by their discussion.

(B) RESULTS

Introduction and Overview of Results

To reiterate, the aims in the present study were to explore how a sample of child molesters demonstrated dysfunctional cognitions whilst disclosing details of their most recent or typical offence. It was anticipated that the situational and preferential molester types would exhibit some differences in their cognitions, as measured by the extended version of the *Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions* (Fon, 1996). It was also predicted that situational type offenders would engage in more forms of denial and minimisations than their preferential counterparts. These distortions were identified by comparing the participants' versions of their offences with official summary information, and were specified according to a *Denials and Minimisations Checklist* (Barbaree & Cortoni, 1993).

Analyses of these participants' data comprised four stages, and these are presented as factors. In **Stage (1) Demographic Characteristics and Offence Variables**, clinical files and official documentation were explored, to present a descriptive profile of the offenders and their victims.

In **Stage (2) Analysis of Interview Transcripts from Coded Meaning Units**, all 25 interview transcripts were assessed for the total number of meaning units contained within each disclosure. For subsequent analyses, the relevant frequency score was transformed into a proportion of the total score. Each offender's transcript was analysed for its configuration of the eight operations variables, to enable a between-groups comparison. The four main content features were examined for their proportional representation within each man's script. Finally, four meta-variables were rated for the extent to which they were expressed in each man's original transcript.

In **Stage (3) Analysis of Interview Transcripts According to Offender Subtypes**, comparisons were made between the two offender types, to determine any differences between the situational and preferential men's cognitive features. The frequency distributions were used to test for significant differences between the two groups of offenders. One-way ANOVAS were performed to identify any significant differences between the two groups, in their use of the eight operations features and in their use of the four contents features. The two offender types were also compared for

their use of the four independent meta-variables via a one-way analysis of variance, which revealed significant differences on two of the communication variables.

Finally, in **Stage (4) Denial and Minimisations**, the proportional numbers of features of denials and minimisations used by offenders in each group were compared. These represented discrepancies in the offenders' versions of their offences and those contained in the official documentation pertaining to the facts of each man's offence. An analysis of variance was performed on the aggregated proportions of denials and minimisations used by the men in each group, and yielded a significant difference. This confirmed the earlier prediction that situational type offenders would engage in more forms of denial and minimisations than preferential type molesters.

(1) Demographic Characteristics and Offence Variables

The twenty-five men involved in the study ranged from 27 to 64 years of age, with a mean average age of 43 years. The mean level of educational attainment was form 4 (range: form 1-form 6). Twenty-one of the participants were Caucasian, with the remaining 4 being of Maori descent. Seventeen (68%) of the men were classified by their therapists as situational offenders, and the remaining 8 (32%) were rated as preferential child molesters.

Analysis of the men's offending histories revealed that the mean number of previous convictions for non-sexual offences was 3.24 (range: 0-18), and the mean number of previous convictions for sexual assaults was 0.75 (range: 0-4). The estimated mean number of victims was 34.2 (range: 1-750), while the mean estimated length of sexual offending history was 11 years (range: 1-20 years). The average mean length of total sentence presently being served was 4 years (range: 18 months-9 years and six months). The offences disclosed by the participants ranged from indecent assaults, to sexual violation, rape, incest and sodomy.

Of the 25 participants, 7 men discussed their offending with a male child, while for the remaining 18, a female child was their most typical or recent victim. The average mean age of victims, when taken together was 10 years old, with a range of 3-15 years. Analysis of gender revealed that of the 7 male victims, the average age was 12 years, with a range of 6-15 years. For the 18 female victims, the average age was 9.5 years of age, with a range of 3-15 years.

The relationships between offenders and their victims were classified into four categories; Stranger, Acquaintance, Familial, and Parental, defined according to the nature of their acquaintance. In group **(1) Stranger**, two men had offended against male children, with whom they were previously unacquainted. In group **(2) Acquaintance**, seven offenders had previously been known to their victims (e.g., neighbour, student), but bore no familial relation to them. Of these men, three had offended against males children, and four men had assaulted female victims.

Group **(3) Familial** included two participants whose victim was a member of the extended rather than the immediate family (e.g., niece, nephew), both of whom had offended against females. Offenders in group **(4) Parental**, comprised 14 of the 25 subjects, and were characterised by either a biological or nonbiological (e.g., stepparent and defacto partner of mother) parental relationship with their victims. Twelve of these men had abused female victims, while two had violated male children.

(2) Analysis of Interview Transcripts From Coded Meaning Units

Frequency Distributions of Coded Meaning Units:

Each participant's interview was examined for the number of individually coded concepts contained in the disclosure of his offence. A total distribution score was generated for all 25 men, by collating the number of meaning units. Each unit was represented by a particular numerical code denoting the specific combination of its *operation* (processing) and *content* (thematic) categories. The number of potential combinations of operation and content features was calculated to be 408, and of these, 183 combinations were used in the group's disclosures.

The distribution of the total number of meaning units utilised in the offenders' transcripts ranged from 63 to 173, representing a range of 110, and a mean score of 108. Table 1., presents the total distribution scores for each of the 25 participants, and represents the total number of coded meaning units contained in each man's transcript. Figure 1., illustrates these tabulated scores, with preferential and situational offenders made distinguishable according to the accompanying key overleaf.

Table 1. Total Number of Coded Meaning Units for Each Offender

Subject	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Total	92	163	105	78	75	77	73	140	133	111	123	98	103
Subject	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	
Total	114	102	148	100	107	63	124	110	98	108	84	68	

Composition of Operations for Individual Offenders:

In order to examine how each participant communicated the information contained in his interview, all 25 coded transcripts were analysed according to the relative composition of each *operation* contained in the coded meaning units. The analysis included an additional operation to the seven outlined in the model since 'Evaluations' were coded according to the dimensions of negative and positive. The eight operational processes analysed were:

- (1) Describing, (2) Explaining, (3) Interpreting, (4) Negatively Evaluating, (5) Positively Evaluating, (6) Minimising, (7) Denying, and (8) Planning.

For each of the eight operations or cognitive processing styles, the total number of meaning units containing corresponding codes was determined through a frequency count. These were then assessed for their proportional contribution to the total number of operations (or coded meaning units) used in each man's transcript. These frequencies were translated into percentages, to represent the relative composition of each operational feature contained in each man's transcript, and are displayed below, in Table 2.

The mean scores for each of the operations indicate that the least utilised operation was (8) Planning ($\bar{M} = 0.44$), while the most frequently used operation was (1) Describing, ($\bar{M} = 57.12$), by the participants in disclosing their offence details.

Figure 1. Total Number of Coded Meaning Units for Each Offender

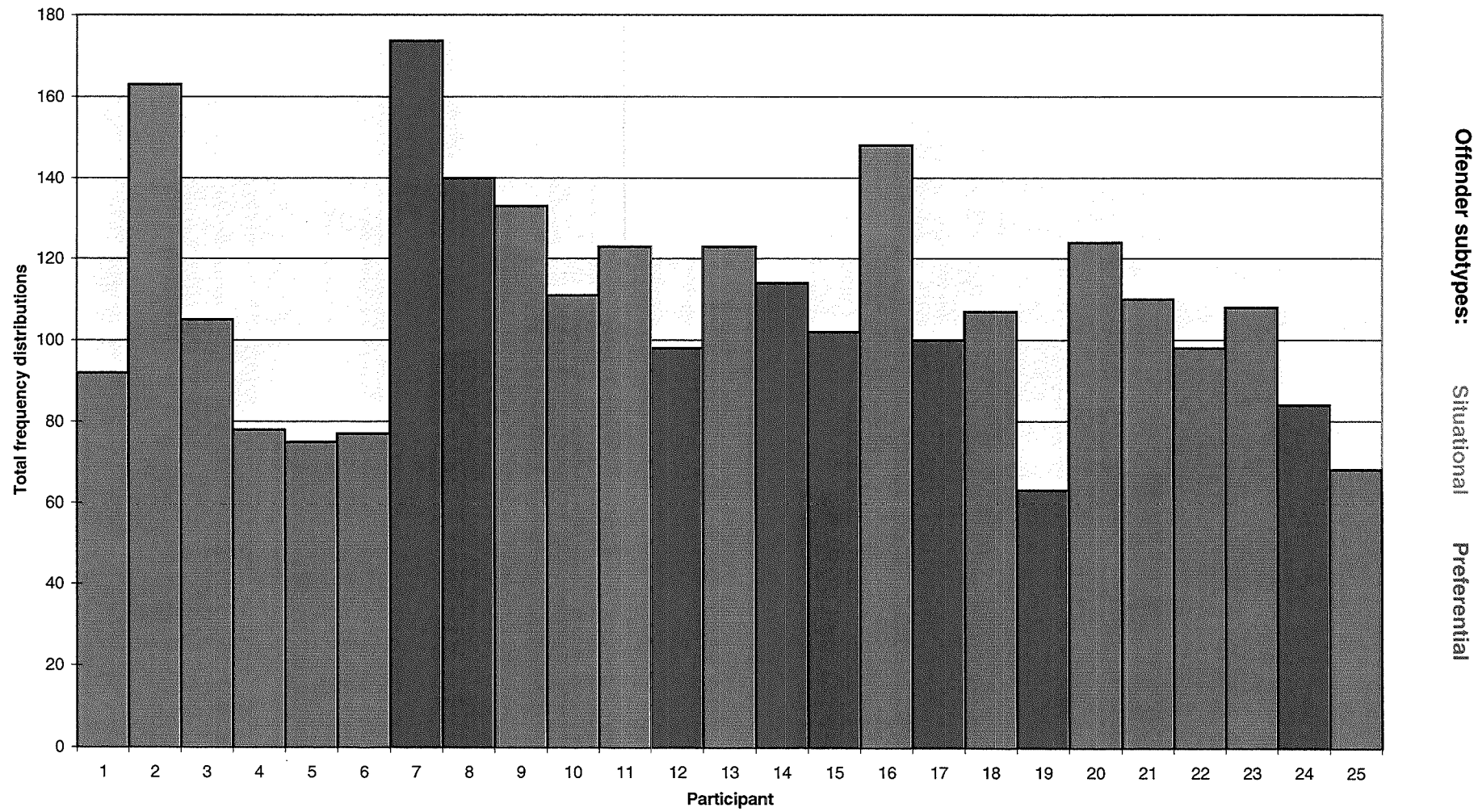


Table 2. Operational Composition of Coded Meaning Units for Each Offender
(% of total score)

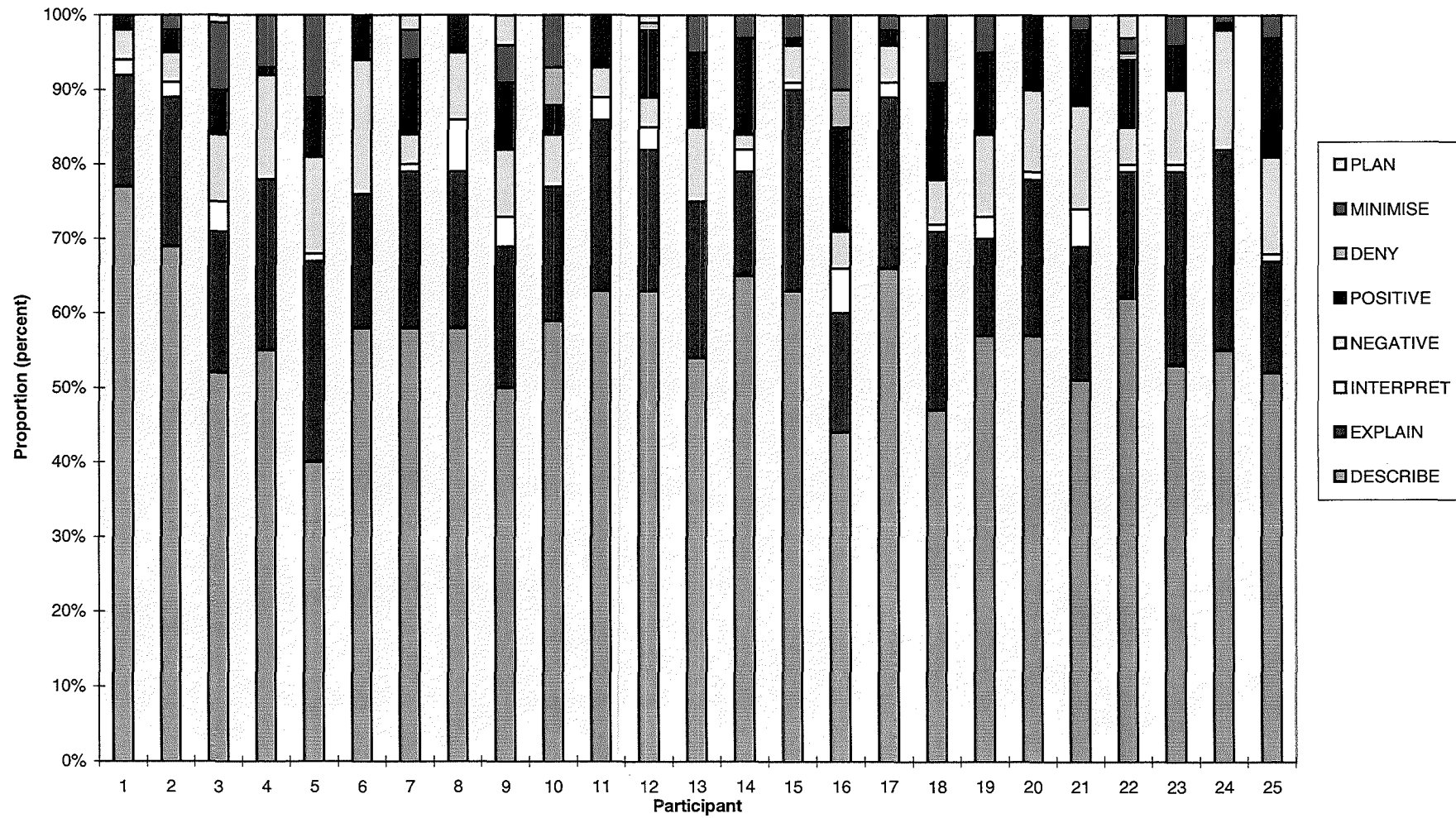
Subject	Describe	Explain	Interpret	Negative Evaluation	Positive Evaluation	Deny	Minimise	Plan
1	77	15	2	4	2	0	0	0
2	69	20	2	4	3	0	2	0
3	52	19	4	9	6	0	9	1
4	55	23	0	14	1	0	7	0
5	40	27	1	13	8	0	11	0
6	58	18	0	18	6	0	0	0
7	58	21	1	4	10	0	4	2
8	58	21	7	9	5	0	0	0
9	50	19	4	9	9	0	5	4
10	59	18	0	7	4	5	7	0
11	63	23	3	4	7	0	0	0
12	63	19	3	4	9	1	0	1
13	54	21	0	10	10	0	5	0
14	65	14	3	2	13	0	3	0
15	63	27	1	5	1	0	3	0
16	44	16	6	5	14	5	10	0
17	66	23	2	5	2	0	2	0
18	47	24	1	6	13	0	9	0
19	57	13	3	11	11	0	5	0
20	57	21	1	11	10	0	0	0
21	51	18	5	14	10	0	2	0
22	62	17	1	5	9	1	2	3
23	53	26	1	10	6	0	4	0
24	55	27	0	16	1	0	1	0
25	52	15	1	13	16	0	3	0
Mean Score	57.12	20.2	2.08	8.45	7.44	0.48	3.76	0.44

Figure 2, which illustrates the above data, clearly indicates that for all offenders, the most frequently used operation was (1) Describing, and the operation least used was (8) Planning, in disclosing their offence details.

Composition of Contents for Individual Offenders:

For each participant, all coded meaning units were analysed for their *content* features, in order to explore the relative emphasis placed on the major content categories. The analysis of content involved four distinct categories. The contents of meaning units that focused on the offender himself had been previously coded according to the dimensions of internal and external features of the Self, and were separated for analysis. The four factors involved in Content are: (1) Self (Internal), (2) Self (External), (3) Victim, and (4) Situation.

Figure 2. Operational Composition of Coded Meaning Units For Each Offender

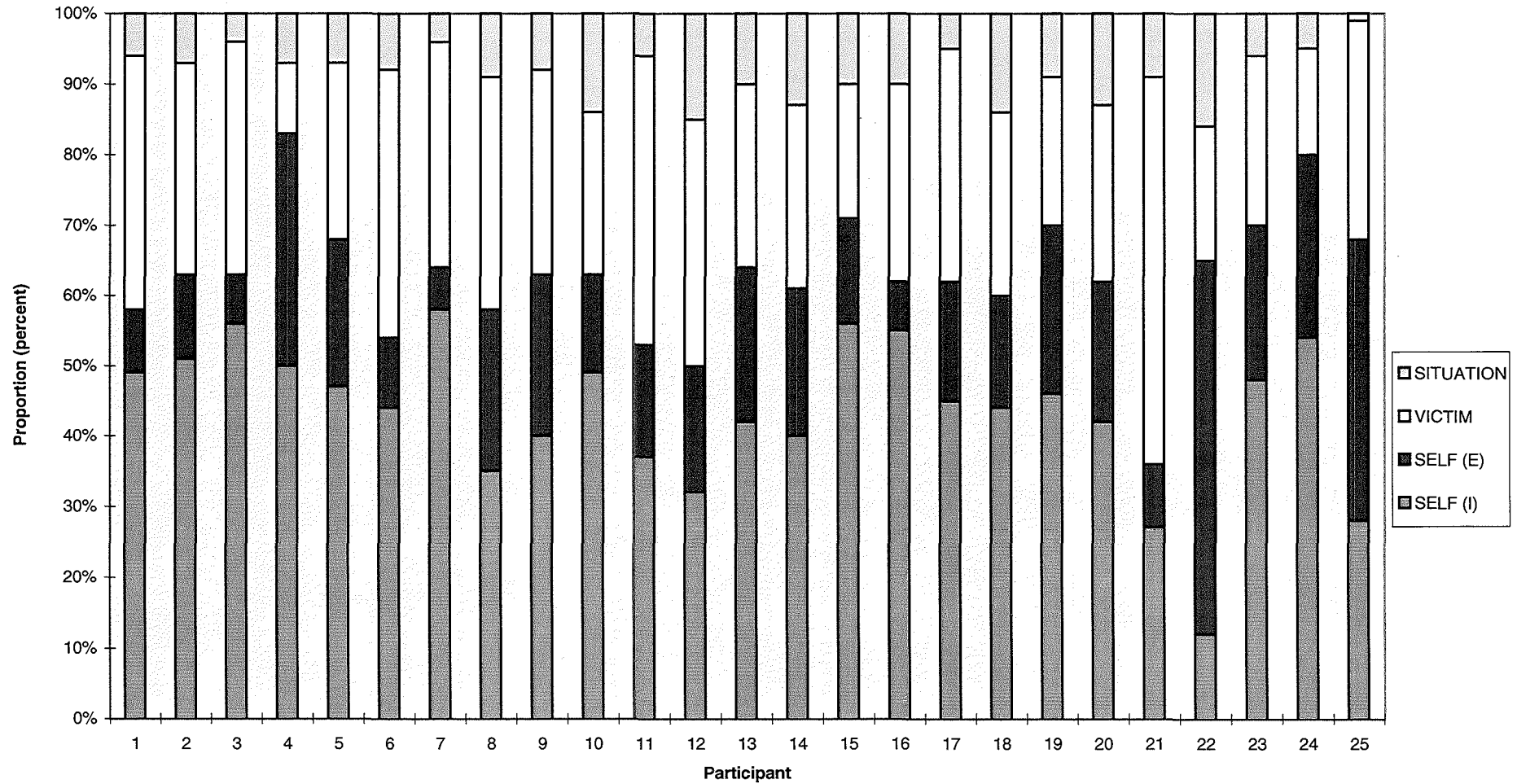


For each of the four content features, the total number of meaning units containing their corresponding codes was determined through a frequency count. These were then assessed for their proportional contribution to the total number of coded meaning units used in each man's transcript. These frequencies were translated into proportions by expressing them as a percentages, and are presented in Table 3. The table displays the proportional composition of each content factor contained in each man's transcript (see Figure 3.).

Table 3. Content Composition of Coded Meaning Units for Each Offender
(% of total score)

Subject	Self (Internal)	Self (External)	Victim	Situation
1	49	9	36	6
2	51	12	30	7
3	56	7	33	4
4	50	33	10	7
5	47	21	25	7
6	44	10	38	8
7	58	6	32	4
8	35	23	33	9
9	40	23	29	8
10	49	14	23	14
11	37	16	41	6
12	32	18	35	15
13	42	22	26	10
14	40	21	26	13
15	56	15	19	10
16	55	7	28	10
17	45	17	33	5
18	44	16	26	14
19	46	24	21	9
20	42	20	25	13
21	27	9	55	9
22	12	53	19	16
23	48	22	24	6
24	54	26	15	5
25	28	40	31	1

Figure 3. Content Composition of Coded Meaning Units for Each Offender



Distribution of Ratings for Individual Meta-variables:

Each of the 25 original disclosures were rated according to four *meta-variables*, (1) Detail, (2) Passivity, (3) Euphemisms, and (4) Concreteness, representing general stylistic features or modes of communication for each man. Transcripts were assessed for the degree to which each independent meta-variable was represented, according to a five-point rating scale.

In order to explore the configuration of each meta-variable across the group, individual ratings were aggregated according to the five points used to measure each variable. The resulting frequency distributions, represented the number of interviews rated on the five measurement points for each meta-variable. These were translated into relative proportions, expressed as percentages (see Table 4, and Figure 4.).

Table 4. Proportions of Meta-variable Ratings of Interview Transcripts

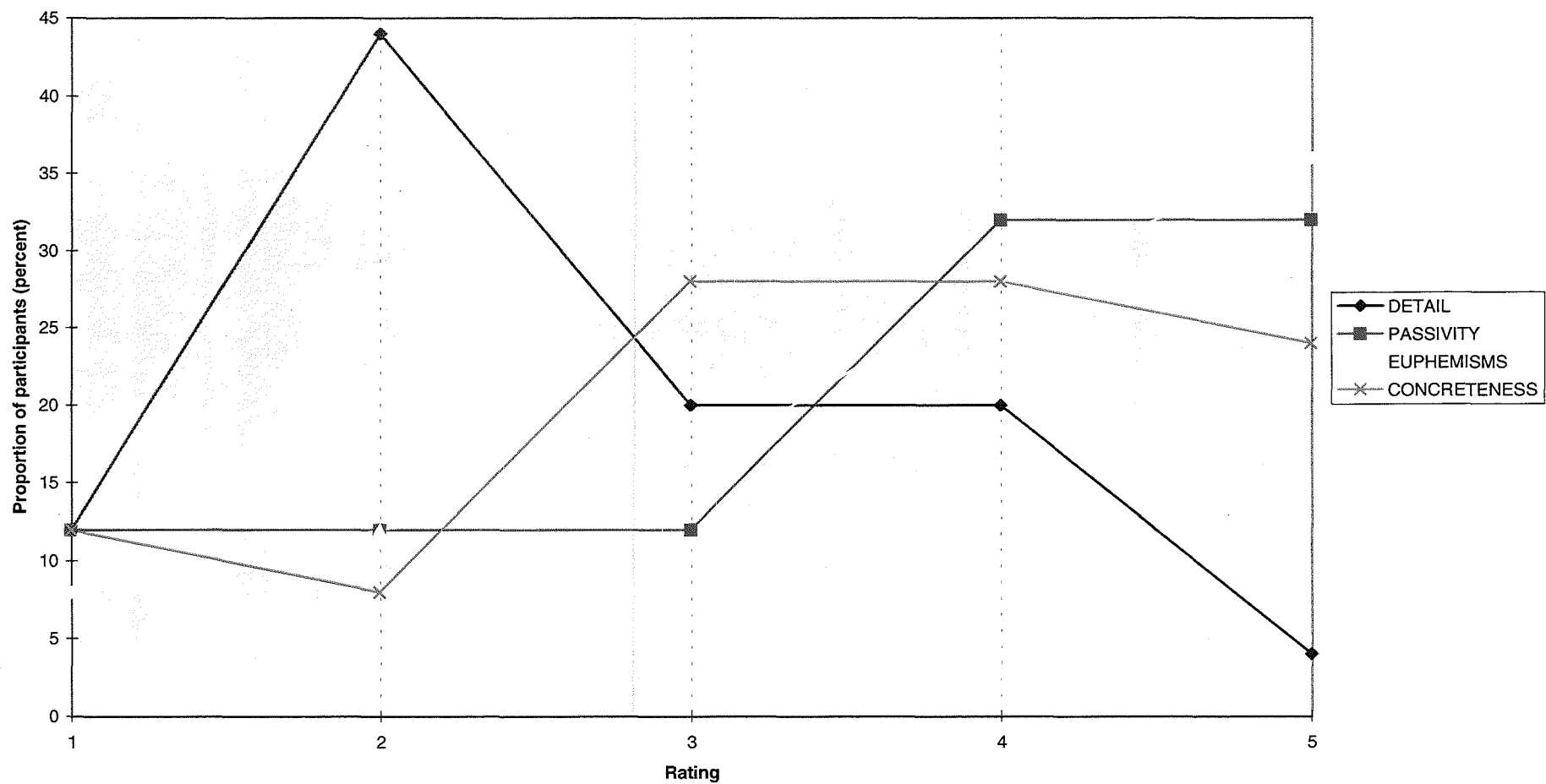
Rating	Detail	Passivity	Euphemisms	Concreteness
1	12	12	8	12
2	44	12	12	8
3	20	12	16	28
4	20	32	28	28
5	4	32	36	24

(3) Analysis of Interview Transcripts According to Offender Subtypes

Analysis of Frequency Distributions According to Offender Subtypes:

To determine whether there was a difference in the *total number of meaning units* used by the two groups of offenders, which were *preferential* and *situational*, a one-way ANOVA was performed on the individuals' scores. No significant differences were revealed, $F(1, 24) = 0.27, ns$, ($M = 107.3$, & 109.3 , for situational and preferential offenders respectively), indicating that the groups did not differ in the amount of meaning units they used whilst discussing their offending.

Figure 4. Proportions of Meta-variable Ratings of Interview Transcripts



Composition of Operations According to Offender Subtypes:

For each of the eight *operations*, the proportional scores generated for all individuals in each of the two subject groups were used to determine any significant differences in their utilisation of each operation. One-way ANOVAS were performed on each operation and yielded no significant differences between situational and preferential offenders on any of the eight operations,

Describe, $F(1, 24) = 2.3$, *ns*, Explain, $F(1, 24) = 0.15$, *ns*,

Interpret, $F(1, 24) = 0.01$, *ns*, Negative Evaluation, $F(1, 24) = 1.3$, *ns*,

Positive Evaluation, $F(1, 24) = 0.6$, *ns*, Denial: $F(1, 24) = 1.3$, *ns*,

Minimise, $F(1, 24) = 2.06$, *ns*, and Plan, $F(1, 24) = 0.05$, *ns*.

Mean scores, representing the average percentage contribution of each variable were generated from the aggregated scores in each group and are presented in Table 5., and are illustrated in Figure 5.

Table 5. Mean Proportional Composition of Operational Features for Offender Subtypes

Offender	Describe	Explain	Interpret	Negative Evaluation	Positive Evaluation	Deny	Minimise	Plan
Situational	55.6	20	2.6	9.2	7.9	0.8	4.2	0.5
Preferential	60.7	20.7	2.4	7	6.6	0.1	2.1	0.4

Composition of Contents According to Offender Subtypes:

In addition to operations features, the investigation sought to explore potential differences between situational and preferential molesters, with respect to the *contents* features of their cognitions. For each of the four content factors, the proportional scores generated for each participant were used in the analysis.

One-way ANOVAS were performed on each factor, to determine whether the two offender types differed significantly in the thematic aspects of their narratives. The ANOVA functions produced no significant differences on any of the four factors, Self (Internal), $F(1, 24) = 0.47$, *ns*, Self (External), $F(1, 24) = 0.04$, *ns*, Victim $F(1, 24) = 0.47$, *ns*, and Situation, $F(1, 24) = 0.22$, *ns*, also.

Figure 5. Mean Proportional Composition of Operational Features for Offender Subtypes

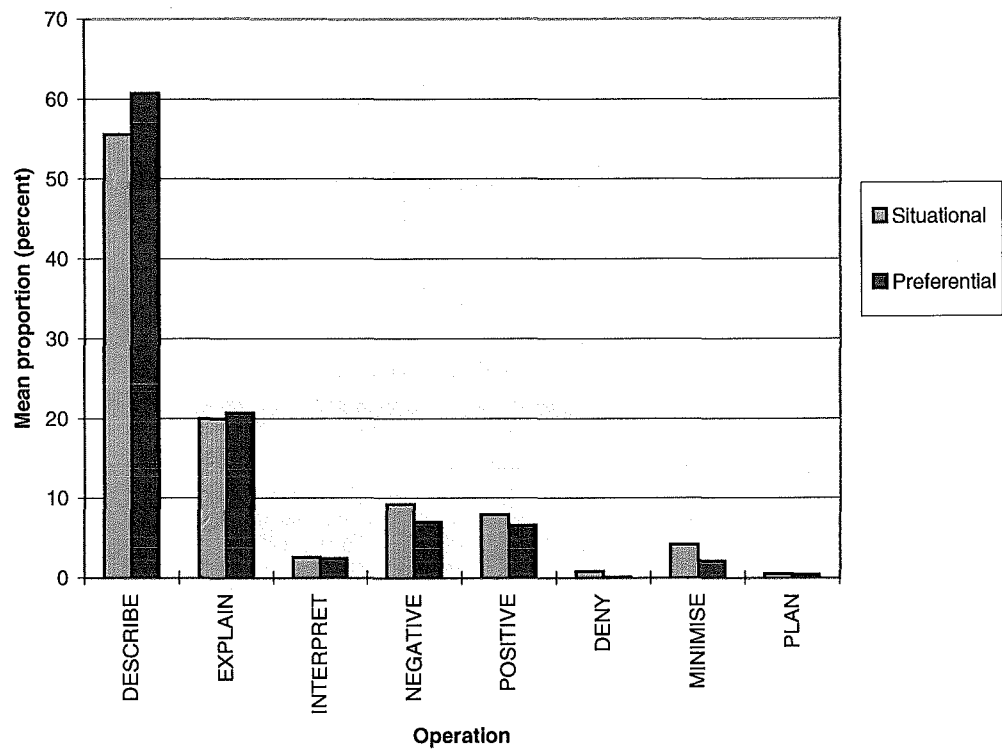
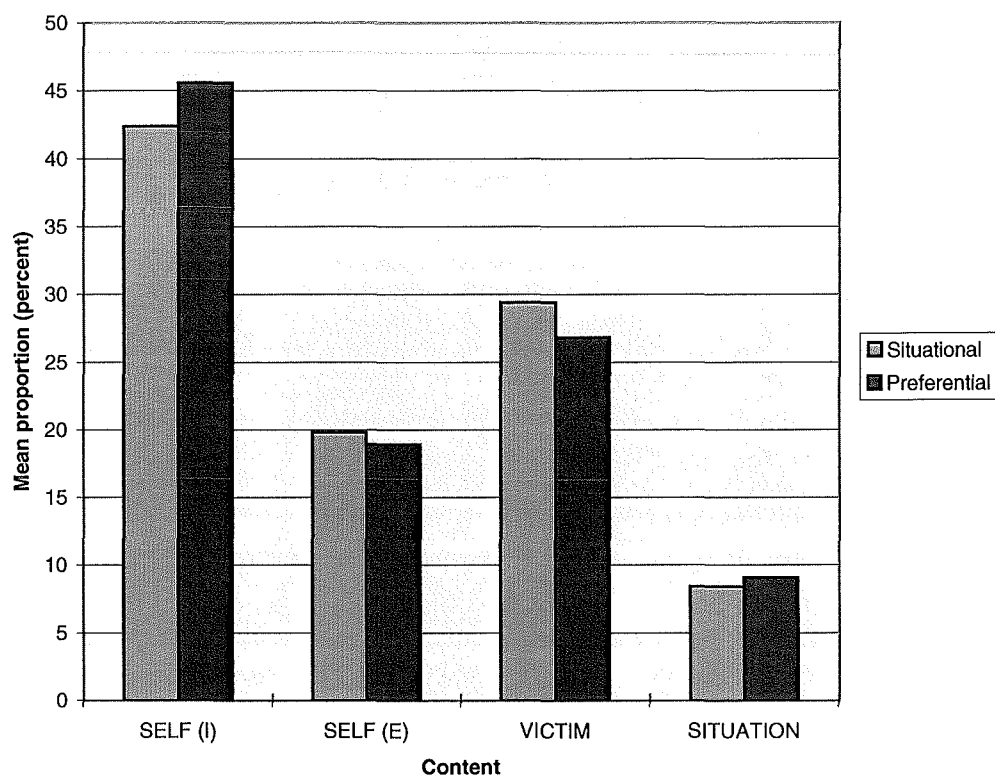


Figure 6. Mean Proportional Composition of Content Features for Offender Subtypes



For each offender type, mean scores were generated, to represent the average proportional contribution of each variable, and are presented in Table 6. (see Figure 6.).

Table 6. Mean Proportional Composition of Content Features for Offender Subtypes

Offender Type	Self (Internal)	Self (External)	Victim	Situation
Situational	42.4	19.8	29.4	8.4
Preferential	45.6	18.9	26.8	9.1

Analysis of Positive and Negative Content Features:

The content features were also analysed for meaning units that were coded according to affect-related features of subcategories, used in coding ten of the Self and Victim-related categories. Dimensions of positive and negative contents were assessed for their frequency of representation in each man's transcript. Proportional scores for each dimension used by individual offenders were used to test for differences between the two groups. A one-way analysis of variance yielded no significant effect $F(1, 24) = 0.04, ns$ ($M = 47.4, 46.0$ for situational and preferential types respectively), indicating that the two molester types did not differ in their use of positive or negative contents.

Analysis of Offence Behaviour Disclosures:

Of particular interest was to assess whether preferential and situational subjects differed in the processes used to convey the details of their own offending behaviours, during their narratives. The use of two independent code combinations were analysed for each man, according to their distributions of frequency, and were then used to compared for differences between the two groups. Post hoc examinations involved the codes 1/1.3b, denoting an offender's Description of his Offending behaviour, (operation and content respectively), and 6/1.3b, representing Minimisations of his Offending behaviour.

The one-way ANOVA performed on the code 1/1.3b, yielded a significant difference, $F(1, 24) = 4.25, p < 0.05$, ($M = 8.11 \& 11.83$, for situational and preferential, respectively). This difference indicates that men in the preferential group

engaged in significantly more instances of describing their offending behaviour than their situational counterparts. Conversely, a significant effect occurred in the other direction, when a one-way ANOVA was performed on the code 6/13b, and yielded, $F(1, 24) = 3.91$, $p < 0.05$, ($M = 4.05$ & 1.43 , for situational and preferential, respectively). Thus situational offenders engaged in significantly more instances of minimisations of their offending behaviour, than did men in the preferential group.

Analysis of Meta-variable Ratings According to Offender Subtypes:

To determine whether the preferential and situational offender types differed in their use of each *meta-variable*, one-way ANOVA functions were performed on each independent variable. Proportional distributions for each variable, rated on five assessment points were generated according to the two offender types, and were used in the analysis of group differences (see Table 7.).

Table 7. Proportions of Meta-variable Ratings for Offender Subtypes

Offender Type: Rating	Detail		Passivity		Euphemisms		Concreteness	
	P	S	P	S	P	S	P	S
1	25	5.9	0	8	25	0	20	5.9
2	37.5	47.1	0	17.6	0	17.6	20	0
3	25	17.6	12.5	11.8	0	23.5	20	29.4
4	0	29.4	25	35.3	12.5	35.3	20	29.4
5	12.5	0	62.5	23.5	62.5	23.5	20	35.3

The tabulated proportions representing the five ratings of each meta-variable, are illustrated in Figures 7.1. - 7.4., according to the preferential and situational offender types. The ANOVA functions revealed significant differences between the groups on two of the meta-variables, Passivity and Concreteness, but not for Detail and Euphemisms.

Detail (see Figure 7.1.), yielded no significant effect, $F(1, 24) = 0.5$, ns ($M = 2.71$, & 2.38 , for situational and preferential respectively), indicating that the two groups did not differ in the amount of detail provided in their offence disclosures.

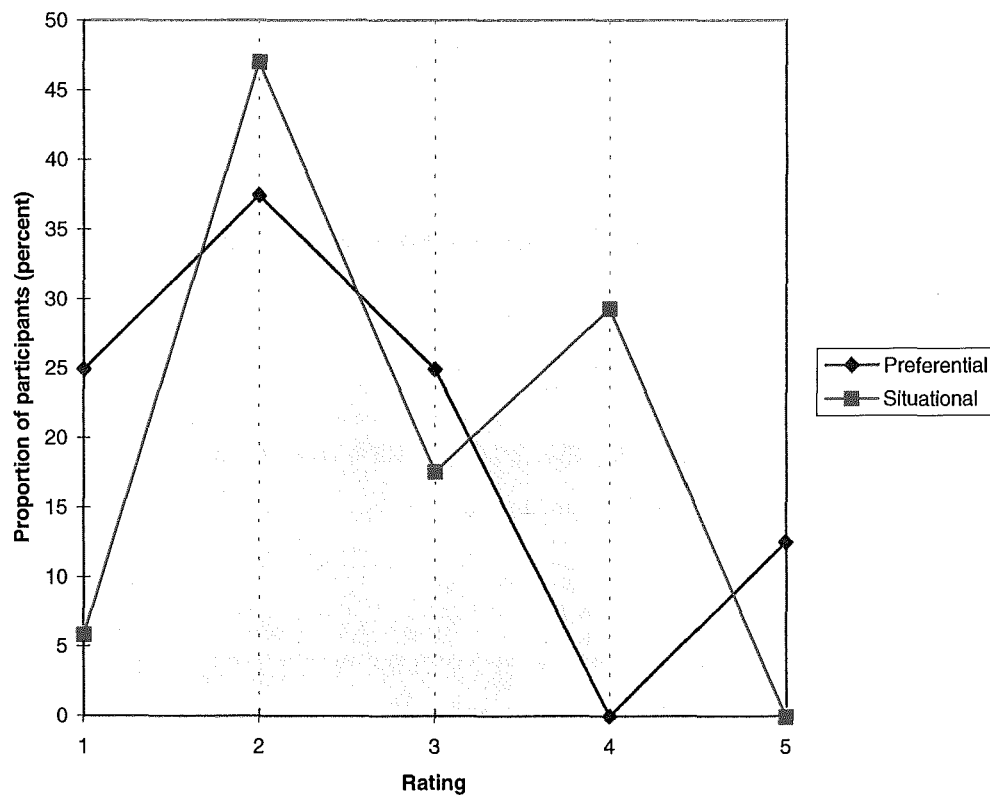
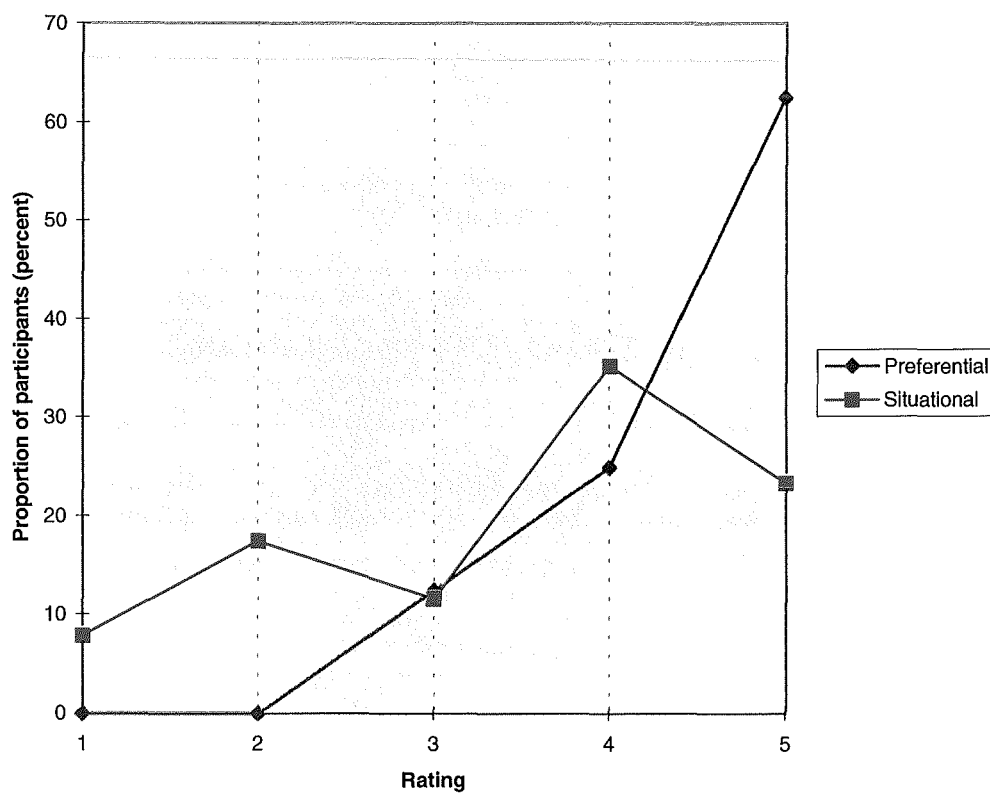
Figure 7.1. Proportions of Detail Ratings for Offender Subtypes**Figure 7.2. Proportions of Passivity Ratings for Offender Subtypes**

Figure 7.3. Proportions of Euphemism Ratings for Offender Subtypes

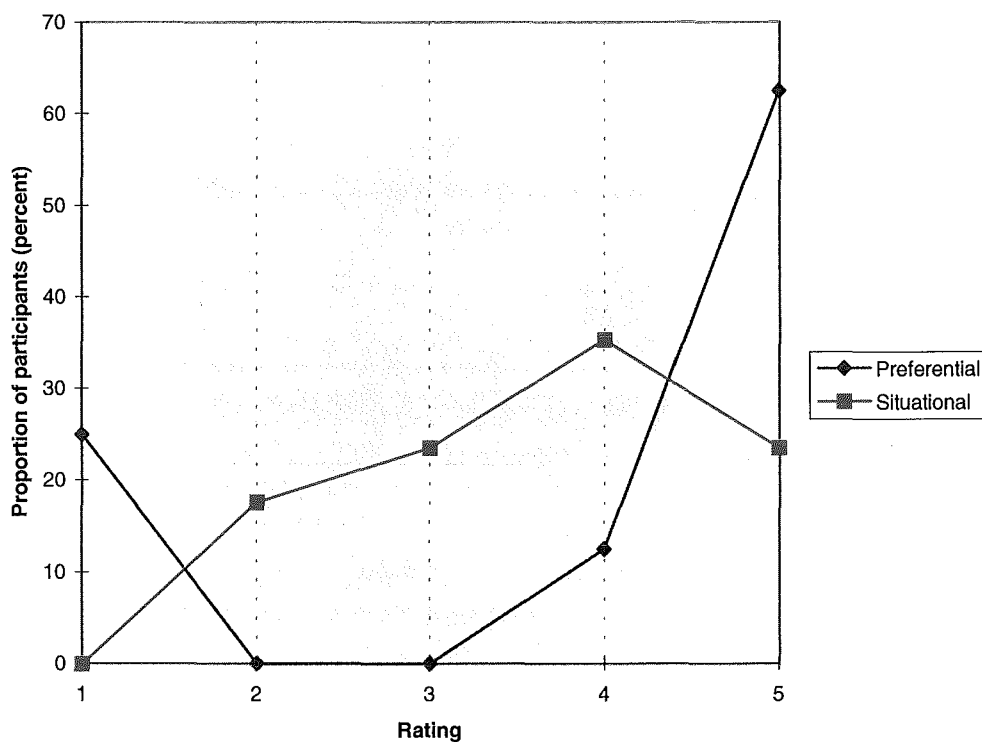
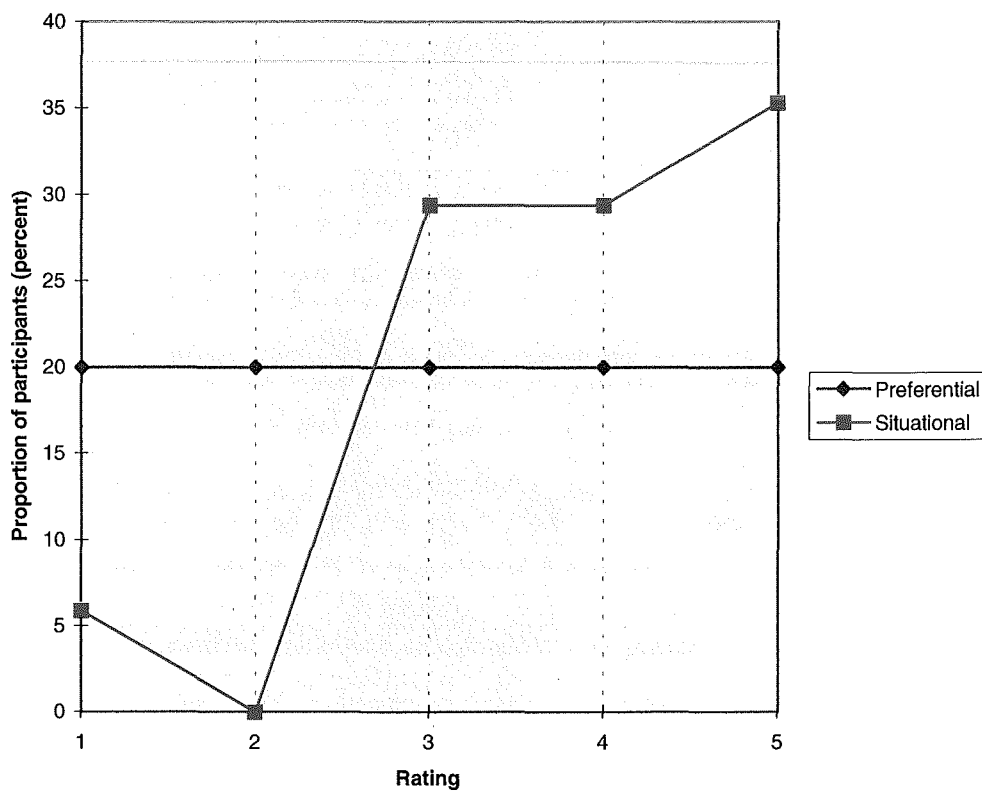


Figure 7.4. Proportions of Concreteness Ratings for Offender Subtypes



Passivity (see Figure 7.2.), was found to be significant, $F(1, 24) = 4.34$, $p < 0.05$, ($M = 3.4$, & 4.5 , for situational and preferential respectively), suggesting that situational type offenders engaged in a significantly greater degree of passivity when recounting details of their offences than did preferential offenders.

Euphemisms (see Figure 7.3.), yielded no significant effect, $F(1, 24) = 0.16$, ns, ($M = 3.65$, & 3.88 , for situational and preference respectively), demonstrating that the offender types did not differ significantly in the degree to which they used euphemistic language.

Concreteness (see Figure 7.4.), produced a significant effect, $F(1, 24) = 8.03$, $p < 0.01$, ($M = 3.9$, & 2.5 , for situational and preference respectively), suggesting that preferential offenders' disclosures were characterised by a greater degree of concrete processing than situational men, who were rated as more abstract.

(4) Analysis of Denials and Minimisations According to Offender Subtypes

It was earlier predicted that situational type offenders would engage in more instances of *denials and minimisations* than preferential type offenders. This expectation was supported by a significant effect obtained through comparing the proportional distributions of these distortions made by members of the two groups of offenders, expressed as percentages (see Table 8.).

Proportional values of denials and minimisations represented in each group of men were taken together, and were subject to a one-way analysis of variance, which revealed a significant difference, $F(1, 24) = 5.252$, $p < 0.03$, ($M = 3.24$, & 1.75 for situational and preference respectively). The effect demonstrates that men in the situational offender group engaged in more features of denial and minimisations than did those in the preferential group.

Table 8. Presence of Features of Denial and Minimisations in Offender Subtypes

	Preferential (N=8)		Situational (N=17)	
	N	Percent	N	Percent
Denial				
(i) of Any Interaction	0	0	0	0
(ii) Interaction was Sexual	0	0	0	0
(iii) Interaction was an Offence	1	12.5	0	0
Minimisation				
(i) of Responsibility				
victim blame	1	12.5	8	47.1
external attributions	2	25	8	47.1
irresponsible internal attributions	1	12.5	7	41.2
(ii) of Extent				
frequency	1	12.5	9	53
force used	3	37.5	10	58.9
intrusiveness	2	12.5	8	47.1
(iii) of Harm				
long term effects	3	37.5	5	29.4

Summary of Results

The participants' interview transcripts were assessed for the presence of dysfunctional cognitions according to two main objectives. The first objective was to compile a descriptive profile of the dysfunctional cognitive features exhibited by the sample of child molester. Incorporated in the multilevel exploration were aspects of cognitions involving processing, content themes and general communication features.

Secondly, the group was divided into preferential and situational offender types, and were compared for differences in their cognitions. Significant differences between the two groups were revealed on several factors, including the specific expectation that situational men would engage in greater instances of denial and minimisations. These results are explored and interpreted in detail in the discussion that follows.

(C) DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The present investigation was designed to explore the nature of child molesters' cognitive features at a detailed level of inquiry. This has not previously been attempted. A Model of Dysfunctional Cognitions (Fon, 1996) was used to categorise meaning units derived from the participants' disclosures of their own offendings, and was used to form a descriptive profile of their dysfunctional cognitions. The examination of cognitive features was necessary in its contribution to ongoing efforts in this area, aimed at accruing a more substantial body of knowledge. The cognitive features expressed by situational and preferential type offenders were compared in subsequent analyses, which demonstrated significant differences on several factors. These differences have implications for the typology in both future research and treatment. The hypothesis that situational offenders would demonstrate more instances of denials and minimisations was confirmed, and can be explained by features of the Theory of Cognitive Deconstruction (Ward et al., 1995).

Analysis of Interview Transcripts From Coded Meaning Units

Participants' transcripts were examined for the *total frequency of meaning units* used in disclosing their offending details. Collated frequencies represented the number of individual units of information, relevant to each man's offence, rather than a general measure of detail, which was assessed later. The group's scores ranged from 63 to a maximum of 173 meaning units, indicating that individual offenders varied greatly in the amount of salient information they provided.

Individual differences that may account for the variance, include a man's ability to communicate and express himself, his level of intellectual functioning, and willingness to disclose information. Due to standardisation procedures used to extract meaning units from the original transcripts, the range then, is unlikely to be a function of the individual's form of disclosure (ie. interactive interviews with the researcher or self-reports).

Analysis of Interview Transcripts

Of the eight *operations*, it was demonstrated that for all 25 men, the process most used in disclosing their offence details was Describing, while Planning, was the least utilised or least reported. Few of the participants reported having deliberately

planned their offences, by constructing events and creating situations for the purpose of assaulting an intended victim. This suggests that, *prior to treatment*, few child sex offenders report engaging in plans to offend, to the extent that it directs their behaviours.

With one exception, all the men reported continued patterns of reoffending, rather than one-time offences, indicating the presence of at least some form of covert planning. This has strong implications for the model of relapse prevention (Pithers, 1990) where seemingly irrelevant decisions are made at an automatic level, and precipitate the man's progression into a HRS. The exact nature and degree of influence exerted by covert planning in precipitating abuse, can only be inferred from examining the context of a man's offence chain, and the factors involved in his progression through to relapse. The extent of covert planning depends on the individual, and is seemingly perceived by him as incidental to his offending, rather than critical.

For several men, initial offences were reported to have been precipitated by specific circumstances which presented an opportunity to assault, and from which a pattern of continued offending evolved. These offenders reported to have abused their victims on a regular basis, when the spouse was absent from home for a predetermined period of time, (e.g., attending night classes). For other men, lifestyle features seemed to have provided an opportunity to assault, especially for men whose occupations involved regular contact with youngsters. However, it is difficult to determine whether, in the absence of these opportunities, an individual would have engaged in sexual assault, either with the particular child or another victim.

Offenders who reported a regular pattern of abuse, frequently cited certain behaviours preceding their offences, such as becoming intoxicated, in response to spousal conflict. According to RP, the mood altering effects of intoxication, combined with the existing negative affect reported by the men (e.g., anger), would have disinhibited their usual behavioural restraints, enhancing the risk of abuse. For these men, behavioural/emotional responses to stressful situations (e.g., intoxication) appeared to have been established as coping strategies, and the relationship between a state of intoxication and child abuse may even have become mutually dependent over time.

At the extreme, an offender may even have created conflictual situations, in order to seek gratification from sexual contact with a child, by using intoxication to justify his loss of behavioural control. Seeking resolution in alcohol abuse then, indicates an awareness, that a man is likely to reoffend, at least at a subconscious level. Also, career choices may represent covert planning for men in guidance roles, and while they may

have had a genuine concern for the welfare of youngsters, their vocational circumstances had enabled easy (legitimate) access to their victims.

The process of covert planning, due to its subconscious nature is both a powerful and insidious feature in child molestation, and varies according to the individual offender. However, therapeutic success relies on its identification, in articulating the factors associated with a man's reoffending, and in the implementation of effective self control and self management procedures. By virtue of its comprehensiveness, the model of dysfunctional cognitions (Fon, 1996) enables the probing of covert planning processes. By accommodating the range of variables in a man's offence chain, the model assists in identifying the relationships between factors, rendering subconscious thinking as detectable, so covert plans can be inferred.

The analysis of the four main *contents* features indicated that for the majority of participants, the topics most discussed were related to themselves, followed by their victims, with the least amount of references to situational factors. This demonstrates that self-related information was the most salient in the men's reports of their offending. It also indicates that the questionnaire device was successful in obtaining the information sought from the participants, given that it was designed to elicit cognitions regarding their offence details, and that they felt comfortable doing so.

Analysis of *meta-variables*, represented four independent modes of communication, which express the degree to which each man used these features during his original (unedited) script or interview. Over half (56%) of the participants provided a great amount of Detail, (for ratings 1 and 2), with only one offender (4%), providing very little detail. The majority of participants (76%) (for ratings 1, 2, & 3) provided sufficient or more detail than required without much probing from the interviewer. Extremely detailed transcripts were characterised by spontaneous and unsolicited provision of information, both related to offending, and in relation to non-essential information, not specifically sought in the interview.

For the offender who provided only a small amount of detail, a preoccupation with legal issues surrounding the offence was predominant and his disclosure was characterised by repetitive and monosyllabic answers, with references to legal terminology. Impending court proceedings may explain his reluctance to disclose detailed information on request and during probing, which may have otherwise been offered willingly. However, references to legal concepts suggested he had a history of child molestation, which was confirmed by a longstanding conviction record.

While the level of detail contained in the transcripts reflects the probing nature of the interview, the provision of information may have been influenced by social desirability, as a result of the situation in which the men found themselves. Through their acceptance into the treatment programme, the group of men had been called to account for their offending, and although they were informed that their participation bore no impact on their sentences, may have seen this as an opportunity to begin their "redemption". Indeed, the majority of the men expressed their gratitude for having had the opportunity to disclose their offending details, as a prelude to therapy. It is unclear though, how much detail would have been disclosed if a more open-ended device was used, and if the men were not motivated by the prospect of rehabilitation in the offing.

Of the 25 participants, a small number appeared as extremely Passive in their offending disclosures (12%), while the majority tended to disclose their offendings in a more active form of language. References to their own actions were presented in the first person, as "I did..then I", suggesting that most of the offenders perceived their actions to be their responsibility. Offenders who used more passive language tended to refer to their assaults in vague, nonpersonal terms or as resulting from the victim's behaviour. Although causal ascriptions were not specifically probed, the use of passive language can be viewed as an attempt to attribute the responsibility elsewhere, by avoiding the personalisation of their actions.

In their use of Euphemisms, the offenders varied in their references to sexual activities and bodily features in anatomically correct language as compared with their relative use of colloquialisms, slang or profanities. Only 8% of the participants consistently engaged in euphemistic language, in the form of profanities or coarse street language. For these men, euphemistic or immature language, appeared as characteristic of the way they communicated their disclosures in general, and may indicate the style of vocabulary associated with their usual social environments. Conversely, 36% of the men used no instances of euphemistic language, and their transcripts tended to be characterised by more sophisticated vocabulary, with accurate references to sexual content. For the remaining 56% of men, euphemistic language appeared as a way of making light of the offending details, often in the form of playfulness or child games.

Some participants used euphemisms to portray their offendings as romantic interludes with a child who held equal status in the partnership. Depicting the offence romantically may represent an attempt to disguise the true (sexual/abusive) nature of the contact by attaching some emotional meaningfulness to it. According to Finkelhor's

(1984) Four-factor theory, a child-sex contact may be motivated by a need for emotional gratification, however, the theory does not explain why sexual activity is engaged in when simply befriending a child would suffice (Hall, et al., 1992). While emotional solace may have been sought at the time of offending, romanticising the encounter is more likely a means of rationalising the offence, to dissipate the discomfort experienced.

However, for some men, romanticising of the child-adult contact may indicate a more general level of cognitive processing, if it represents a preexisting belief rather than a post-offence distortion. The offender may genuinely regard children as sexual and emotional equals, believing the victim to have also experienced the encounter as romantic. This can be explained in light of studies into child molesters' interpersonal constructs, which have been found to differ for children and adults (Howells, 1979; Horley, 1988). Child molesters tended to perceive children in idealised and submissive terms and adults as more threatening and dominant. Possibly, for some men, the presence of these generalisations resulted in romanticising their victims, especially for those with little inclination or ability to interact (sexually and emotionally) with age-mates.

On the scale of Concrete to Abstract processing, the offenders in the group varied from very concrete to very abstract in their thinking processes. Low levels of processing (1, 2) were exhibited by 20% of the men, with 48 %, exhibiting middle level processing and less. Just over half (52%) of the men were rated as more sophisticated in their processing style. In interpreting these results, it must be reiterated that the scale points were defined by the sample itself, and therefore, demonstrate comparative ratings within the current sample of molesters.

Analysis of Interview Transcripts According to Offender Subtypes

Some differences were found to be significant when the cognitions of preferential and situational molesters were compared. These have implications for the Theory of Cognitive Deconstruction (Ward et al., 1995), which underpins one of the aims of the current study. The theory, which distinguishes between early and late onset offenders, reflects a diagnostic point of distinction between situational and preferential offenders. Etiological and developmental experiences differ for the two offender types, and result in their offending characteristics and cognitive processing styles. Unfortunately, however, comparisons with earlier findings are difficult to make, given the absence of research based on this child molester typology.

That situational and preferential offenders did not differ in the *frequency of meaning units* used in their disclosures indicates that the amount of information provided by men in the two groups is not a distinguishing feature between the two subtypes. However, certain features of the interview itself may have precluded a possible difference from emerging. Firstly, the questionnaire was structured for the purpose of obtaining as much detail as possible, with questions that specified the type of information sought, aided by examples. Secondly, men who did not initially volunteer enough information were interviewed further, to obtain the amount of detail required.

Situational and preferential type offenders did not differ significantly on any of the *operations* factors, indicating that they do not differ in the ways they communicated their offence details. However, given that the sample size was relatively small, a larger scale investigation may reveal significant differences between the groups. For example, the operation with the most divergence between the mean scores was Describing. Preferential men exhibited a higher trend for using this style of communicating offence details than did situational offenders. On a larger scale of investigation, this trend may be more divergent, resulting in a significant effect.

Of the four main *content* (Self-Internal, Self-External, Victim, Situation) categories, no differences were found between the offender types. Demand characteristics of the situation may have prevented any possible differences from emerging, since the questions asked offenders to refer specifically to these content areas, by describing the behaviour of themselves, others, and their victims.

The offender types did, however, differ in the ways they referred to their own offending behaviours. Firstly, preferential men provided more descriptions of their offending behaviours than did situational men. According to the offender typology (Groth, 1979), because the preferential offender does not experience his inclinations as unsettling, he is void of either shame, guilt or remorse. Therefore, it may be inferred that preferential participants were inclined to provide descriptive accounts of their offence behaviours, due to the absence of conflict, experienced by the situational men.

In contrast, the situational men disclosed the details of their offending in a more abstract form, by using various forms of minimisations, to disguise the severity of their abuse. Deemphasising the extent of their offending behaviours was often done by dismissing their actions as accidental rather than intentional. The situational offenders then, in contrast with the preferential men, experienced remorse and guilt for their offences, represented by their use of minimisations. Taken together, these results

support the conjecture that preferential men can be distinguished from situational men according to the processes involved in their cognitions, given the presumption that minimisations require more abstract levels of processing than descriptions.

Meta - variable Analysis of Offenders' Original Transcripts

Preferential and situational type men did not differ significantly in the amount of Detail they provided, indicating that amount of detail is not functionally related to a child molester subtype. While the interviews were designed to elicit a certain amount of detail, variances on this factor are most likely attributable to individual differences among the offenders. This concurs with the earlier finding that there was no difference in the frequency of meaning units used by two groups of men.

A significant difference occurred for Passivity, with situational men engaging in greater degrees of passivity than did preferential offenders. Frequent use of passive language by situational men included references to their victims as instigators, seducers or having forced the offender into the sexual encounter. Conversely, preferential offenders tended to be more matter of fact in their descriptions and referred to their own actions more than did situational offenders.

This difference supports the earlier finding that, in relating the details of their offences, preferential offenders described their own offence related behaviours more than their situational counterparts. These differences suggest that situational men attempt to disguise or depersonalise their involvement in their offences, whereas preferential type men provide a more 'factual' or direct account of the how they behaved. According to cognitive deconstruction, due to a lower level of cognitive processing, the preferential men did not experience conflict between their actions and their morals. In contrast, the dissonance experienced by the situational type offender makes it too painful to acknowledge responsibility for his offending behaviour, and so uses more passive language, to avoid being accountable or owning his actions.

Associated with passive language, are the underlying attributions for responsibility. By engaging in more use of passive language, situational men avoided taking personal responsibility for their actions, but also attempted to attribute the causes of their offendings elsewhere. Often the victim was portrayed as the initiator or as actively participating or by referring to their sexual encounters in the third person, and making light of situation.

These distortions, according to cognitive deconstruction, were used to reduce the offender's sense of culpability, in an attempt to dissipate the negative feelings of guilt, shame and embarrassment that arose during the interview. This interpretation receives support from the earlier finding that situational offenders engaged in more instances of minimisations of their offence behaviours, and supports the diagnostic distinction made between the two molester types.

Preferential participants were significantly more Concrete in their disclosures than were situational offenders. Concrete thinking was characterised by active language and graphic accounts of the men's offence details, which tended to be communicated in the present tense, indicating that these men, even at the time of interview were focussed on the physical sensations experienced. According to cognitive deconstruction, these offenders are unlikely to experience negative feelings such as guilt, and as a consequence are not inhibited by features of more abstract processing such as minimisations that were apparent in situational offenders. Therefore, preferential type offenders may be regarded as being more concrete at a generalised level since they disclosed their offendings in this manner after their occurrence.

On the other hand, situational men, would have engaged in various levels of concrete processing during the offence cycle, and at the time of relapse would have been engaging in concrete thinking, for the offence to occur. However, since abstract processing in these men was evident in the form of evaluations and other features then they would be more motivated to engage in certain distortions. For example, while causal attributions were not directly probed, anecdotal observations from the study observed implicit blame being placed on the men's significant other either by way of sexual rejection or physical absence from the home.

Finally, as predicted by cognitive deconstruction (Ward et al, 1995), situational men displayed significantly greater instances of *denials and minimisations* than did preferential offenders. This is consistent with the view that situational offenders offend during deconstructed episodes, in contrast to preferential offenders for whom offending is typically ego-syntonic and therefore supported by deconstructive defences. For the preferential offender then, adverse developmental experiences result in a type of self-schema that is compatible with their offending in adulthood, precluding conflict resulting in deconstruction. It is also likely that preferential men titrate their offending behaviour to sub-significant distress, thereby further supporting their perceptions of victim harm, whereby they gradually 'groom' their selected victim(s) in preparation for sexual contact.

(D) CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Conclusions

In the current study, a topographical profile of the of child molesters' dysfunctional cognitions, was successfully compiled by analysing their offending disclosures through a multilevel system of examination. The process of coding each meaning unit, was both quantitative and qualitative in that the analysed data were represented by frequency counts which reflected specific dysfunctional thinking combinations of content and processing factors. Consequently, the level of detail acquired and its measurement were amenable to analysing how an individual child molester related to, and conveyed the details of his offending. This enabled many factors salient to his offending to be identified, including those that were unusual or idiosyncratic and may otherwise be missed in a more rigid, less dynamic assessment process.

The findings, by revealing differences in cognitive features between the preferential and situational offenders, support the assumptions made by Groth's (1978) typology, rendering its continued use as viable. According to Groth (1978) the preferential perpetrator has a longstanding, lifestyle, pattern of assault, and does not experience his inclinations as unsettling, and is therefore, void of shame, guilt and remorse. When challenged, he is concerned with the legal issues concerning his deviant behaviour, rather than the consequences for the victim or moral conflict. In contrast, the situational man will have offended under stress, and regards his deviant behaviour as morally abhorrent, and a digression from his usual sexual preference for adult partners.

Cognitive deconstruction, which underpins some of the aims of the study, distinguishes between early-onset and late-onset offenders, and loosely reflects a diagnostic point of distinction between preferential and situational offender subtypes. The findings of this study support the idea of cognitive mediation involved in a process of deconstruction, which accounts for the differences found between the two child molester subtypes in their minimisations and denials.

For the situational offenders, deconstruction at the time of their offendings, involved a shift from higher levels of cognitive functioning to a state of concrete thinking, and absence of self awareness, so as to avoid negative self evaluations resulting from a violation of their morals. For preferential men, a state of deconstruction is

unlikely, given that they demonstrated greater concreteness in their thinking, during their interviews (post-offence), indicating a lower level of general cognitive functioning. These findings highlight the need to assess cognitions according to different child sex offender subtypes, since their modification is central to therapeutic success.

Treatment efficacy may also be enhanced by such comprehensive assessments that enable predictions to be made about an individual child molester's risk of recidivism. For example, Groth (1978) suggested that, compared with situational men, preferential child molesters have a stable preference for children, their risk of reoffending is likely to be higher. Thus, this study, by revealing cognitive differences between the offender subtypes, confirms the validity of the typology, which may be used to identify a man's amenability to treatment, and in making predictions about recidivism.

Limitations of the Study and Directions For Future Research

Generalisability and Participant Representativeness:

In identifying a representative population of child molesters, some restrictions in generalisability of the results are presented by the sample of participants in the study. First, all the participants were convicted, incarcerated child molesters, who had accepted the opportunity for rehabilitation, and, having admitted the need for treatment, had acknowledged their offending. Second, participation in this study was entirely voluntary, and had no bearing on either sentencing or preferential treatment for the men. Third, child molesters not included in the study were men who continue to perpetrate without detection, and those who have been convicted and incarcerated and have not selected the option of treatment.

To acquire a fuller picture of the way child molesters think, future investigations would utilise greater numbers of offenders, including non-adjudicated participants from the community. In this study, all the participants had been accepted for rehabilitation, by admitting to their crimes, however, the preferential offenders are likely to comprise only a subset of preferential offenders in the main. Such perpetrators then, are likely to exist in greater proportions than represented in the study, many of whom continue to offend without ever being detected and convicted. For these men, sexual abuse of children forms an integral feature of their lifestyles, and the significance of these relations for the offender may not be dissimilar to adult relations in non-offenders.

As these men do not view their inclinations or deviant behaviours as unjustified, societal sanctions against child-adult sexual contact forces them to jealously guard their offending, as detection would surely destroy a way of life that is both desirable and acceptable to them. Although an ethical dilemma may be present, it would be interesting to conduct this study by recruiting non-adjudicated preferential (and situational) offenders from the community. By giving them assurances of confidentiality, the information revealed by these men may have implications for some aspects of offending. Although in the present study, planning did not distinguish preferential offenders from situational offenders, it may reveal a difference if the sample included preferential offenders presently at large. If the child molester sample did include a range of men in different stages of judicial process, a continuum instead of a dichotomy from preferential/situational typology may be feasible, and would be useful as a covariate.

As discussed earlier, in the current study, some factors demonstrated trends in the data which may reveal significant differences between preferential and situational child molesters drawn from a substantially larger sample. For example, while the offender subtypes did not differ significantly on any of the eight operations, the operation with the most divergence between the groups was describing. The preferential men exhibited a higher trend for using this style of communicating their offence details than did situational offenders. It is possible that, in investigations incorporating a larger sample size, a greater divergence between the groups may occur, and yield a significant (ie. reliable) effect.

Future research would also benefit from extending the scale of participation to include a range of control groups, closely matched for their demographic characteristics. Members of control groups should include other child molesters (e.g., non-incarcerated men receiving outpatient treatment, convicted offenders not receiving any treatment, adolescent offenders etc.) and other types of sex offenders, for example rapists of adults and children. This would enable the dysfunctional cognitions of child molesters to be compared for both similarities and differences with these other groups.

Adolescent child molesters could be regarded as a distinct group, since therapy programmes for this cohort group differ from those of adult child molesters, due to the need to address developmental issues. Because less is understood about adolescent child molesters than adult offenders, examining their cognitions and comparing them with adult child molesters would assist in providing more information about their cognitions and offending characteristics.

Such information would aid in the development and implementation of intervention strategies, designed to prevent the youth from becoming an adult offender, either as a habitual behaviour (preferential) or as an escape strategy (situational). Extensive examination of cognitive features may even indicate whether a certain adolescent offender exhibits a tendency towards a particular subtype, if he continues to offend. Counter strategies for situations which put the adolescent offender at risk, may prevent him from developing into an adult offender, so that his deviant behaviour is not integrated into his behavioural repertoire, regardless of the type of child molester he is.

Specification of Offence Details:

Some unforeseen concerns regarding offence descriptions arose during the study, although these involved only a small number of the participants. For example, one offender disclosed details about an offence which had not been reported, and required further interviewing about a documented offence, in order to assess denials and minimisations. Some offenders reported having regularly abused their victim(s) over a period of time, and were unable to isolate a single incident for interviewing. Instead, they described a pattern of offending, which was deemed acceptable in fulfilling the aims of the study, given that sufficient detail was obtained from their disclosures.

A small number of the participants were incarcerated for crimes that had occurred some time ago (up to 15 years), and had apparently impeded their ability to recall the details of their offences, at least in the initial stages of the interviews. However, because any offenders with dementia were excluded from the study, memory loss as a result of a disorder could not be ascribed as a cause of recall difficulties. Offenders who cited an inability to recall the details of their offence were interpreted by the researcher as using an excuse, since over the duration of the interview, the lost memories gradually returned. Therefore, the time lapse between a man's last incident of sexual molestation and the interview is unlikely to have had a real effect on recall ability, and did not appear to preclude the emergence of dysfunctional cognitions.

Another difficulty was presented by variations in judicial note keeping, where the brevity of information contained in official case reports ranged from graphic and detailed accounts of specific incidents, to those documented by brief notes, containing little specific detail. Those which were characterised by brief notes were few, and concerned offenders who had assaulted numerous children according to a certain pattern or system of abuse that was used repeatedly with each new victim. This was fortunate for the

purpose of the current study, as details about specific offences could be gleaned by the composite information, obtained from the individual's conviction records.

If a major aim of future research involves the identification and assessment of denials and minimisations, establishing some intake criteria may be helpful to ensure that offenders' disclosures correspond with documented offences. However, the criteria need to be practical, as if they are too rigid, this may restrict generalisability by excluding potential participants and resulting in a biased sample. For example, a biased sample may eventuate if the majority of the participants have been convicted in a particular region where the authorities record very detailed information about offenders and their crimes.

Interview Structure and Data Collection:

Due to the structured questions in the interview, it is difficult to ascertain whether the child molesters' contents features would differ if the information was provided in a more spontaneous method. Thus future investigations using the model may benefit from utilising a more loosely structured format. For example, if a free recall task is utilised, offenders would describe in detail what happened in their most recent offending experience, without being prompted by specific questions and examples. However, for the purposes of the current study, the semi-structured interview design was warranted, given the level of detail sought. If these probe questions had not been included, the risk of not obtaining enough information would have been great.

Also, it is acknowledged that the very nature of the model and its coding system posed an inherent and unavoidable difficulty by depending upon judgements to be made on the part of the coders. Therefore, the intensive procedures used in developing the coding system for the model, and in establishing inter-rater reliability cannot be overstated. Any ongoing investigations will need to adhere to the practices of developing well defined parameters and definitions in corroboration with research assistance, in the generation of analytic systems in this area of inquiry.

Extending The Scope of Investigations Using a Multilevel Model:

The current study generated a voluminous data set, illustrating the potential for examining child molesters' cognitions via a multilevel system, and the numerous avenues of future inquiry. A valuable approach to utilising the model with offenders' disclosures would be in conducting more extensive comparisons of offender subtypes in their use of specific code combinations. Several of these combinations have already been identified

as salient to the men in the current study, and warrant closer examination. For example, offenders could be compared for their use of positive and negative evaluations associated with specific contents features (e.g., significant other) in order to understand more about their appraisal processes.

Future investigations into cognitive dysfunctions will also need to accommodate factors that were beyond the scope of the current investigation, by incorporating means of identifying and defining additional factors in the offence chain. For example, causal attributions were not specifically assessed, but were alluded to (by participants who implicitly blamed their partners, for being physically absent or declining sexual contact). These were identified as negative evaluations of the significant other. Causal ascriptions could be assessed as a supplement via the Revised Gudjonsson Blame Inventory (1990) or by using the Benson 4ADS (1989).

The model, having recently been developed does not distinguish between features of surface level distortions and entrenched maladaptive beliefs, and this may be an unrealistic expectation of its intended use at this time. While the ABCS (Abel et al., 1989) is limited because of its transparency, a challenge for future research would be to develop a system for identifying child molesters' maladaptive beliefs in more subtle ways. This may be achieved by building concepts that feature in the ABCS into the existing model or as an adjunct or supplementary device, with attendant protocols for their measurement. In the current study some of the participants, especially preferential men, did present with maladaptive beliefs, although these were not identified as such by the coding system used.

Some features of denials and minimisations were identified in a separate analysis, in order to determine whether the offenders distorted the factual aspects of their offences. However, future analyses of denials and minimisations could be extended to include various aspects of the offenders' conviction histories. For example, participants' offending records could be examined for the number of previous victims, sexual offences, victim gender, age, and the types of sexual interactions engaged in.

The multilevel model was designed to analyse data according to four stages of the offence chain, based on the assumption that different cognitions emerge at these stages. While this is an important feature of the model, it was not utilised in this study, as at the time, the model was not equipped with protocols for applying the offence chain. However, during the present study it became apparent that the offenders' cognitive features did change according to different stages of the offence cycle, indicating that

such an assessment is both plausible and worthwhile. For instance, several participants made negative evaluations of their significant other during the early stage of their interview which corresponds with the background factors phase in the offence chain.

Although the interview was designed according to the stages of the offence chain, a corresponding analysis of the data required instruction from the model, in order to define the constituent features of each stage. The development of parameters for distinguishing the progressive stages in the offence chain will enable the examination of an individual child molester's cognitive features as they appear in his own offence cycle. This would assist in revealing the functions of other dynamics in a man's offending, and so enhance the brevity of information acquired. Analyses of the offender's use of the meta-variable factors would also be appropriate for use at each stage in his offence chain.

Assessment of Dysfunctional Cognitions in Therapeutic Settings:

For treatment programmes utilising cognitive-behavioural techniques, active participation from the individual child molester is essential to treatment efficacy. It is possible that, as with the present study, interviews which are structured and analysed according to the stages in the man's offence cycle may form a component of therapy. The information acquired through this process could serve to educate the offender about the nature of his offence cycle, so that he may understand his own thinking processes and how they relate to his pattern of abuse.

In the current investigation, the interview was administered prior to the commencement of treatment, in order to avoid contaminating the data. However, post-treatment analysis would be a worthwhile endeavour for future research, in order to compare child molesters' cognitions with those revealed at pre-treatment analysis. In the absence of time constraints, post-treatment analysis (by readministering the interview) with the participants of this study, would have occurred at the completion of the treatment programme (37 weeks).

Given that treatment is designed to convince offenders that they *did* plan and set up their offending, repeating the assessment at post-treatment may be a useful tool in measuring change as a result of therapy. However, a suitable time lapse preceding post-treatment may be necessary in determining the longevity of therapeutic change, and may be better utilised as part of follow-up, rather than immediately at the conclusion of therapy. As mentioned at the beginning of this report, a three-year period should precede followup when determining treatment efficacy with child molesters.

Summary and Final Comments

The profile of dysfunctional cognitions that emerged from the study suggests that child molesters' basic descriptions are by far the most common mode of communicating their offence details, with explicit reports of planning statements being quite rare. The offenders' accounts of their offending processes tend to be focussed predominantly on themselves rather than on environmental factors or their victims. Confirmation of anticipated differences between the offender subtypes were interpreted by some key concepts embodied in the theory of cognitive deconstruction (Ward et al., 1995). The most notable difference was that the situational men engaged in more denials and minimisations than did the preferential men, supporting the concept of deconstruction.

This study has demonstrated that child molesters' dysfunctional cognitive features are fundamental in assisting the perpetuation of their offending behaviour. Utilising a multilevel system has been valuable in analysing these cognitions, by revealing their complexities. This information, together with the differences between the offender subtypes has important implications for making etiological and assessment assumptions. Such information has the potential to assist in predicting a man's risk of recidivism and his amenability to treatment by identifying the features of his cognitions, whose modification is critical to therapeutic success. Meanwhile, the ultimate goal remains; to reduce the risk of recidivism, in order to break the cycle of sex crimes against children.

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APPENDIX I

A MODEL OF DYSFUNCTIONAL COGNITIONS

The model presented below, provides a system for describing dysfunctional cognitions in child molesters, according to four levels of analysis. Included is a version of the model in it's early stages of development, which was generated at the time of the present undertaking, and has since been refined by the author (Fon, 1996). However, as previously mentioned, the model was originally designed to encapsulate the features of dysfunctional cognitions at a conceptual level, and required the development of a detailed classification system for use in it's application to the present study.

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THE MODEL

The model of "Dysfunctional Cognitions of Child Sex Offenders", is a multilevel descriptive or categorisation system of cognitions. These are categorised on different levels of analysis. This model differs considerably from preceding models of "cognitive distortions", as these early models solely emphasised the content of the distorted cognitions. In addition to content, this model emphasises the concept of time, the method or operation by which information is presented, and the general style of presentation.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE MODEL

This model is a method of classifying or categorising dysfunctional cognitions in child sex offenders. A primarily inductive approach, 'grounded theory', was utilised for the development of this model. The data consisted of 12 protocols, transcribed from interviews with incarcerated child sex offenders, conducted by Kia Marama therapists during the initial evaluation period for the programme.

Sentences or passages where the offender relayed information regarding offending history, victims, events of offences and other relevant offending pattern information was highlighted. A composite list of all highlighted sentences was made, sentences were condensed, ensuring 'essence' or meaning was not lost. These sentences

or ‘concepts’ were then grouped into categories according to their essentially similar meanings.

Originally, 48 categories were generated, and several of these categories were collapsed together when they could be subsumed under a more general category. The final category list was then developed into the model by establishing relationships between the categories at different levels of analysis.

(A) THE OFFENCE CHAIN

Background Factors --High Risk Situation --Lapse -- Relapse

At the centre of the model is the **Offence Chain**, which is similar to the Relapse Prevention model with the exception that the fifth or ‘post-relapse’ stage has been omitted from the present model as this stage may be considered similar to the ‘Background Factors’ stage.

The offence chain appears at the centre of the model as this “anchors” the cognitions and cognitive processes or operations in time. It is expected that different cognitive operations and content will be apparent at different stages or points of the offence cycle. For example, planning will be more apparent as a cognitive process during the period leading up to an offence than after the offence. Evaluation may primarily occur subsequent to the offence and not very often during the actual offence or immediately preceding the offence.

(B) COGNITIVE OPERATIONS

Cognitive Operations are the methods or processes by which information content is relayed, that is ‘how’ the offender presents information regarding his offending, offences and victims. Seven categories of cognitive operations were generated, and are as follows:

(1) Describing:

Providing an illustration or account of persons, thoughts, events or situations by way of details and facts (e.g, what happened, when, where, what the consequences were).

(2) Explaining:

Attributing causes or reasons for events or behaviours, providing a retrospective account of 'why' he or others acted, felt or perceived a situation or event in a particular way.

Included are attributions for his own/victim's behaviour, or a situation.

(3) Interpreting:

Attaching a meaning or intention to a behaviour (typically the victim's) or situation, concurrent with, or immediately subsequent to, the event occurring. During the HRS and lapse stages of the offence chain, the offender's interpretation or misinterpretation of the actions of his victim influences whether he will proceed through the chain to relapse. A victim's behaviour may be interpreted as seductive or inviting sexual contact to occur.

(4) Evaluating:

Appraisal/judgement of own or others behaviours, perceived intention or thought with affect. Occurs most frequently in lapse and post relapse stages, and reflects the degree of responsibility felt by the offender. How he evaluates his actions or thoughts during the lapse influences his progression into relapse. Post-relapse evaluation concerns attempts to terminate offending, if just momentarily or continues. Subsequent to lapse or relapse, guilt/shame may be experienced, and may evaluate himself negatively. He may even evaluate himself positively to avoid negative self evaluation, others may be blamed.

(5) Denying:

Relates to wrongfulness of the act, and involves deliberate omission or misrepresentation of information. He may deny the occurrence, ability to recall, or the sexual nature/intention of his behaviour. Failure to disclose information in the presence of interviewer probing.

(6) Minimising:

Misrepresentation of information by partial omission of relevant details, or downgrading aspects of the act. Included are frequency, duration, extent of intrusiveness, severity.

(7) Planning:

Involves covert or implicit planning, occurring at different stages of the offence chain (ie proximal or distal planning), and can differ in degree of planning employed.

(C) COGNITIVE CONTENT

Cognitive Content has been divided up into three separate areas of which the offender may focus; the self, the victim, or the situation.

(1) SELF: Cognitions relating to the self can be either internal or external in emphasis.

Internal: **Personality:** enduring traits, including attitudes, beliefs, roles, the need for power and control.

Psychological States: any current state experienced by the offender, i.e. sexual arousal, fantasising, affective states.

Behaviour: either relating to offending or general behaviour.

Sexual Attitudes and History: any attitudes or beliefs regarding sexual activity or sexuality and prior and current sexual experiences.

Psychological Disorders: distinct from current states (intoxication), these are long standing.

External: **Significant Relationships:** current/history, incorporates aspects of relationship with significant other/spouse.

Family: current/history, homelife also.

Other: work colleagues, friends.

Lifestyle Factors: circumstances involving work, finances, health, perceived as background factors to offending, and may be negatively evaluated.

(2) VICTIM: Cognitions relating to the victim generally centre on the perception of the victim by the offender, but can be expressed in many different forms.

Behaviour: verbal and nonverbal behaviour of the victim, includes sexual behaviour.

Personality: enduring traits and characteristics.

Response to Abuse: includes degree of enjoyment, acceptance of abuse.

Attitude to Offender: way in which the victim is perceived to like, trust or respond to offender.

Relationship with Offender: perception of the relationship by the offender may be viewed as father and son, lovers, pseudo-adult etc.

Effects/Impact of Abuse: awareness/lack of impact on victim

Psychological States: any current state experienced by the victim, such as degree of sexual arousal or affective state.

Family Relationships: current/history,

Sexual Attitudes and History: includes prior victimisation by other offenders, and (perceived/actual) sexual experience/attitudes.

(3) SITUATION: Cognitions relating to the circumstances and context, usually involve behaviour of others, setting, location, time, previous activities, without direct reference to the offence or behaviour of offender or victim.

(D) META-VARIABLES

Four **meta-variables**, Detail, Euphemisms, Concreteness, and Passivity define the general style in which the offender discloses information about his offending. Each meta-variable represents a different aspect or dimension of language use on which the protocol is rated. Each meta-variable is rated along a dimension or scale of 1 to 7, where each rating is decided after reading a certain amount of passage. Several ratings may be made for one protocol as positions along the dimensions may change during the course of the interview or self report.

Detail: Degree of detail with which the offender describes the offence.
 1 = little detail, requires a lot of prompting by interviewer for more detail, or written account is short and sparse in detail,
 4 = moderate amount of detail,
 7 = very detailed account, requires very little or no prompting by interviewer, or writes a lot of information in self report.

Euphemisms: Use of euphemisms, by vague, incorrect, immature language/slang, to disguise nature of what is being expressed/implied.
 1 = uses few euphemisms,
 4 = moderate,
 7 = uses euphemisms consistently.

Concreteness: A continuum, from concrete thinking (1) to abstract (7).
 Concreteness will focus on thoughts, feelings, sensations and behaviours.
 Abstract thinking will involve awareness of consequences and evaluations.

Passivity: Passive language when describing his actions, on a continuum of very passive (1) to active (7), implying level of engagement in offending.

is rated. As the style of presentation may change over the course of the interview or self report, several ratings of each meta-variable are made during the classification of a protocol.

Detail:

Detail refers to the degree of detailed information provided by the offender when describing his offending.

Protocols containing relatively little detail (1), reflecting an offender's reluctance to disclose information, are characterised by brief answers (eg monosyllabic), a failure to provide requested information, a failure to elaborate on specific points, events or offences and obtaining the information often requires frequent interviewer prompting. The following extract from an interview demonstrates an offender's (S) unwillingness to answer the therapist's (T) questions directly, illustrative of a nondetailed account:

- T what effect do you think the incident had on him?
- S in the victim's report it said it never damaged him
- T but what do you think?
- S it said in the victim's report that he would get over it
- T what do you think?
- S who wrote the victim report?

Information provided in moderately detailed accounts (4) covers what is requested only, with no or very little elaboration. Interviewer prompting may be required in part to clarify issues but not to extract the necessary information.

example

Very detailed accounts (7), require very little or no prompting by interviewer, and are full of detail, often containing more than is requested. Elaborate description of offences is characteristic of these protocols, for example;

S I says “if you love me”, this is what I says, I says “if you love me, which I am sure you do..”, she says “I do honey”, “then we should have sex, we should get closer”, and she says “we are close”, I says “but closer” and then she got all embarrassed, and then I thought I’d work on her a bit more. So I was fluffing around with words in a way like.... and I’d think of a way that I could manipulate the girl and then I’d come back and say “what if we just try and have sex”, and she would say “I don’t know how”.

Euphemisms:

The use of euphemistic language is identified by the use of vague, incorrect or immature language or slang, substituted for correct terminology or as to disguise the nature of what is being expressed or implied. References to the nature or intention of actions (e.g., ‘I woke up and started *playing* with her’, ‘I was only skylarking’), or to the victim’s genitals (e.g., I was playing with her *private* parts’), are common examples found in offending accounts. Protocols are rated as reflecting a frequent use (1), an infrequent use (4), or no use (7) of euphemistic language.

Concreteness:

The level or depth of cognitive processing an offender engages in may be viewed as falling on a continuum from Concrete to Abstract. This category refers to not only what information was attended to and how this was processed, but also how the events of the offence were subsequently re-evaluated. Where an offenders processing style is primarily concrete, references to offences concern elements of behaviours, feelings and sensations. The following extract illustrates concrete processing;

Abstract processing is characterised by an awareness or insight into the consequences, morality, and dynamic impact of sexual abuse on the victim, offender and wider community.

APPENDIX II

INFORMATION SHEET/CONSENT FORM

The aim of this project is to enhance our understanding of the role of beliefs and attitudes in the process of sexual offending. Your tasks within the project will be to attend two sessions with an interviewer. In the first session you will be provided with a questionnaire in which you will be required to describe your experiences in detail. We are also interested in your thoughts and feelings that occurred before, during and after your contact with the child. The interviewer will be present at this time to guide you through the questions, and to answer any queries you may have.

The duration of the first session is expected to be between half an hour to one hour. To answer the questionnaire, you may choose to respond by either writing or by speaking into a dicta-phone, whichever you feel more comfortable doing is acceptable. In the second session, the interviewer will ask you to discuss in more detail some aspects of your experiences that you described in the earlier session, in order to gain a better understanding of your thoughts and feelings. This session may also take up to an hour.

The information you provide and the answers you give in both sessions will remain confidential. The results of the project may be published, however, your identity will not be revealed in any way. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary, and you are entitled to withdraw your involvement at any time, should you wish to do so, and you may request the return of any information you provided up until that point. Finally, your participation in this project will not provide you with any direct advantages in terms of conditions or privileges, nor will it count against you either.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the University of Canterbury Human Ethics Committee.

I agree to participate in the project described above, on the understanding of these conditions.

NAME:

DATE:

SIGNATURE:

APPENDIX III

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE: "DESCRIPTION OF YOUR EXPERIENCE"

In completing this questionnaire, you will be asked to think back to the time of your last sexual encounter with a child. To answer the questions, please provide as much detail as possible. We are especially interested in not only what you did, but what you thought and felt at the time. You may take as much time as you need, and if you encounter any problems, do not hesitate to ask for help.

(1) Describe what was happening in your life both before and during the time that you had contact with the child.

Consider also what you did, thought and felt about:

- (a) Your home life (e.g. your relationships with family members)
- (b) Your work life (e.g. your relationships with coworkers, if not employed please state)
- (c) Your social life (e.g. your relationships with friends).

For example: did anything significant happen to you or someone else, and how did you react?

(2) Think back to the day of the last incident and describe in detail what happened before it occurred.

Consider the following:

- (a) Before you felt the need to make contact with the child, where were you, what was happening to you and others around you, and what did you do?

For example: you had an argument with someone (who?), you had been drinking, you were alone, the child was in your presence at this time.

- (b) What were your thoughts and feelings at this time?

For example: did you decide to make contact with the child who was there, did you feel unhappy, good about yourself, angry, lonely, rejected, stressed, and did you feel in control?

(3) Just before you had contact with the child, what happened, and what were you feeling?

For example: did you feel sexually aroused, and did you have any sexual fantasies?

(a) What did you do at this time?

For example: you went for a drive, a walk in the park, to a friend's place.

(b) How did you meet up with the child?

For example: you became friendly with a child in the park, a child came over to talk to you, you went to babysit for a friend, you knew the child from your work.

(c) Describe your thoughts and feelings at this time,

For example: did you anticipate having contact with this child, if so did you look forward to it, or did it just happen, and how did it happen?

(d) Describe what happened between you and the child after you met at this time.

For example: did you talk, play, go somewhere together?

(4) Describe in detail what happened between you and the child during the incident.

Consider the following:

(a) what did you do

(b) what did the child do

Describe how you felt when this was happening

For example: did you enjoy it, did you feel in control?

Describe how you think the child felt:

Did he/she enjoy the experience, and how did he/she respond?

(5) What do you think of this particular child?

For example: do you think the child is friendly, happy, unhappy, lonely, good, bad?

How do you think this experience will affect the child?

For example: will she/he be helped by it, harmed in any way, like you more, learn more about sex?

Do you think the child wanted to have sexual contact with you, and if so, why?

APPENDIX IV

DIAGNOSTIC CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT OF CHILD MOLESTERS

Typology of Preferential and Situational Child Molesters

Preferential (fixated) Type	Situational (regressed) Type
Primary sexual orientation is to children	Primary sexual orientation is to agemates
Pedophilic interests emerge in adolescence	Pedophilic interests usually evident in adulthood
Usually no precipitating stress/no subjective distress	Precipitating stress usually evident
Persistent interest and compulsive behaviour	Involvements more episodic, depending more on stress
Premeditated, pre-planned offences	Initial offence may be impulsive, not premeditated
Identifies with child	Substitutes child for adult
Male victims primary targets	Female victims primary targets
Little or no sexual contact with agemates	Sexual contact with child coexists with agemate contact
Usually no history of substance abuse	Offence is often alcohol related
Characterological immaturity; poor socio-sexual peer relations	Underdeveloped peer relationships

(adapted from Groth, Hobson, and Gary, 1982).

APPENDIX V

DENIAL AND MINIMISATION CHECKLIST

(For use with child molesters and rapists of adults, and both adult and adolescent offenders).

CHECKLIST:

Denial

Denial of any interaction

Denial interaction was sexual

Denial interaction was an offence

Minimisation

Of responsibility

Victim blame

External attributions

Irresponsible internal attributions

Of extent

Frequency

Number of previous victims

Force used

Intrusiveness

Of harm

No long-term effects

Victim education

No Denial or Minimisation

(adapted from Babaree & Cortoni, 1993).